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The Boundary of Emptiness
Kara no Kyoukai
the Garden of sinners / the Garden of Oblivion
Shuumatsu Rokuon
Final Record

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/ Prologue
12:00~13:00

Shizune Seo stood on a steeply risen cliff side, overseeing the dim ocean.

The sun had been slowly rising over the horizon, yet the sky is still a lead gray color.

The heavy storm clouds rumbled.

It's as if some kind of boiled stewed vegetables clinged onto the sky.

However, on the other side of the horizon seems like a different scenery altogether.

In summary, the whole panoramic view of the ocean cannot be called an ocean.

How do you say this, the ocean is dry.

The ocean was thrown into a huge vortex, rapidly being drained into the 'bottom'.

That is because 3 days ago, Earth suddenly gave a loud bang and became deflated.

Just like an empty plastic bottle that was being squashed. There was no reason and it felt unreal for that to happen. Even though there are many theories, such as a meteor strike or the movement of the earth surface, etc etc, however, we humans don't have the time for research and solutions.

In the end, the Earth's deflation has no sign or reason.

The cities with the greatest human population were in a state of chaos. We knew this ending first-hand; that is why we left the city before the chaos happened, at an unnamed cliff at the edge of the country to welcome the end.

As to why we knew about the situation beforehand, it is due to my ability to predict the future.

But that is all it is to my powers. I know neither the cause of the end of the world, nor the solution. That is why I can only make the safest choice to die… and it is the only way to leave the human world that I could save my friends.

During the 3 days of the collapse of the Earth and mankind.

The 5 young girls that ran to the cliff helped each other, encouraged each other, fought against each other, hated each other, and finally killed each other, overlooking the dim ocean.

I looked back, pieces of Azaka-san's body littered in front of me, as well as the almost entirely burned corpse of Fujino. Misaya-senpai headed back to the city, however, she should be zombie chow by now.

Even though I am the sole survivor of mankind, this shall only last for a few more minutes. Because my arms and legs had been sliced off and I am rapidly losing blood, I had already lost consciousness. At the hazy last moments of death, I started to remember the things that had happened till today.

That's right. The world shall end before dawn.

Shizune Seo stared blankly as everything started to unfold before her eyes.

As I thought in my head why do I have such a doubt, why did I only feel frustration.

The ending actually didn't matter. It was as if a day had passed by. I still could accept it even though I had lost everything in an instant. Because I have never seriously lived my life yet. I don't have the fiery soul of Azaka Kokutō, I am just like a clock routinely accepting anything that comes in my way every day. Even though there is not much difference every day, if the world came to an end, I will just think that 'Oh, so that is how it is'. Although I looked like an average person, I have no more humanity inside my heart left. I only have a brief understanding of the future event, that is why I have this habit – and till now only that I felt pessimistic about this.

However, the me now, and the form of the ending are two separate things altogether. I have no qualms about the end of the world. In one minute I won't care about anything anymore.

But, there was still a feeling of dismay that I couldn't be at ease.

I suddenly had a doubt. Why is this ending always so heartbreaking?

No matter if we hated each other, or destroyed the friendship between us. Even though we had gotten back-stabbed, or ran away like a nameless soldier, I just felt really stupid, but this could be accepted too. Even though I myself was forgotten, even though people forget yet were unable to be recorded down, if most of the endings are happy, that is the ending I can accept.

However, no matter how happy each day was, they are all useless when the end arrives. Everything will have an end. If there was no way to apologize for the sudden end, at least there could be a happy ending for everyone.

When it was too late to wipe off this feeling and loneliness, the ocean was emptied as if it were a tub filled with water that was unplugged, the surface of the world cracked, and fell into the abyss.

This is also a type of World End.

I closed my eyes silently

第一回 【9：30～11：30】

/ Chapter 1
9.30~11.30

We were running in the woods before dawn.

Running for our lives in the woods of the familiar Reien Girls Academy.

“Ah!?”

However, a scream just like in a manga was emitted followed by the nuisance of falling.

She was embarrassingly tripped by a tree root, falling face first into mud.

“I say, Shizune!? You fell face first onto the ground!?”

Oh, Azaka-chan, this is the thing you were worried about.

“Seo-san!? Ah-ah, really, why did you purposely pick this kind of moment to cause other people problems. You should be like me, act a little more lady-like!”

Ouji-senpai always has the inability to read the atmosphere.

Even so, the two people walking in front... Azaka Kokutō and Misaya Ouji stopped in their advance, and turned around. Their expressions were tense. They were being chased. No, the situation was much worse than that.

This was because we were being chased by dozens of zombies.

“Ah, uwah, uwaaahhh…!”

Even though I tried to get up as fast as I could, due to the extreme chaos my arms couldn’t move at all.

I could not have the courage to tell them “Just run, don’t care about me”.

The sound of the violent footsteps became more and more clear.

The rotten corpses came out from the woods while producing creaking sounds.

Fingers that couldn't be identified as either bones or rotten flesh reached out and grabbed my ankles. To have a taste of live human flesh, even the corpse, whose identity is hard to determine, bent downward for the girl's ankles.

"___"

....Alas, this was the ending.

It also became this kind of progress. This future. This ending. I regretted it very much.

We also lost our target this time, and our progress forward performed a life threatening accident.

"AzoLto----!"

In the nick of time, came the fate changing moment.

The woods at night suddenly burst into an ocean of flames.

Azaka Kokutō's long dark hair danced with the wind, just like a falling star.

The person that changed my death fate is no one else but my friend, Azaka Kokutō.

She immediately turned around, her fist hit the face of the corpse that was about to eat its prey… Shizune Seo, in an instant, ignited into a hot flame with a boom.

That was either the powers from the gloves she was wearing, or her personal powers. Even though this was rather sudden, she is a girl that allows everything she touches to be ignited.

Seven days ago before the world became like this, she simply admitted that "it's not really anything strange, it's better than a lighter, but not as good as a flamethrower, just a power that doesn't deserve to be proud of or anything". Even though any average person can't let anything that they had hit to burst into flames, she herself however doesn't feel that it was any big of a deal, that could be explained by any principle out there.

Azaka Kokutō, just like Shizune Seo, was a Reien Girls Academy year 2 student. 17 years old.

Even though she was born with the looks of a rich dainty girl, her expression was frank yet energetic at the same time. Her personality was upright, she valued her friends with an extreme sense of justice to finish off the perfect protagonist role. Her survival skills were able to aspire to every student of the academy; she was a person complete with integrity.

“Shizune, get up quickly! Those things are coming here soon!”

“Tha- thank you Azaka-chan. But there is no use, we can’t escape anymore!”

However, no matter how special Azaka Kokutō is, she still couldn’t escape from fate.

She should have ran away. From the moment she stopped and chose to help her friend, she lost her escape route.

We were slowly surrounded by more zombies.

A man wearing his suit. A rather handsome young man that got his hair dyed white that was bitten. Familiar Reien Girls Academy students. The sisters that were still strict yet gentle seven days ago. Etc etc. The people that were different both on the outside and inside, but became something that chased down humans that were still alive together.

“…Can’t escape, does that also mean I will be killed?”

“…Azaka-chan, if you protect me you will be bitten by a second one. If not, when the fifth one reaches you, you will be gone.”

“…Uwahh----I don’t want to hear about this kind of future. Is there no brighter future? For example, ‘when the younger sister is in danger, the big brother will arrive like some knight in shining armor’ or something?”

“Um, that kind of future never existed. But don’t you worry, in five minutes it will be the same, no matter what, in another hour it will all be over. Even though we are able to pull through now, at the end---“

“I had already told you; don’t tell that kind of prediction to anyone anymore! If you want to give up, please wait till you are alone and it will not be too late!”

Then, the woods started to rustle.

I should mention that the rustling was like a breeze. Countless, more accurately dozens of transparent “things” flew through the woods, attached onto the zombies.

“This is great. Please rest in peace.”

Misaya Ouji was a conductor conducting her song.

At her command, the “things” that were attached onto the zombies exploded in succession, creating holes in the stomach or chest of the zombies. That destructive power could rival a bomb.

“Misaya-senpai, beautiful!”

“…You should be properly thanking me, and then reflect on your actions Kokutō-san. Fighting is about the survival of the fittest. Even though you are unbeatable in close combat, if the enemy bit you even once, you are dead. I warned that getting close to them is not a good idea already.”

“I already knew about that without you telling me. Misaya-senpai’s fairies are to clear off the small fries, while I am dedicated to the ‘BOSS’ fight. Now that I’ve mentioned it, didn’t you mention that you’d used all of your fairies already?”

“Well, they are reserved for emergencies only. Don’t be so picky when you are saved.”

Upperclassman Misaya Ouji grunted, flicked her long hair.

◆

If Azaka-chan was a maiden, Misaya-senpai was a mature female. She has a tall figure; her actions gave others a more ‘womanly’ feel than a ‘girl’ feel, more ‘queen’ feel than a ‘princess’ feel. The hair band above her bangs was her only ‘student’ look.

…Even though those were the past, Misaya Ouji was a student and ruler of Reien Girls Academy.

No matter what, she was the chairman’s eldest daughter; she also used to be the student council president, after her retirement she became the vice dormitory president. For me, she was as if a towering castle; for Azaka Kokutō, she coincidently became an enemy.

However, Misaya-senpai had a side of her that no one knew. She was able

to control dozens of roughly 5cm of height fairy-ish things that can't be seen by the naked eye.

"Even though it is a special power, it was not that much of a big deal. I am just able to control low level creatures that can't be seen by the naked eye." That was what she exposed seven days ago.

The standards of these fairies even though they were equivalent to bees, but they are ferocious in numbers, some of them could also self-destruct, which saved us countless times already. Misaya-senpai had the ability to single-handedly escape and met up with us at the dormitory. It must have been because of the fairies controlling powers. However, this queen is only the queen of her dying country.

"Even though I used up all my cards, the situation now has changed. We just need to get to the teaching building and we could be saved right, Seo-san?"

Misaya Ouji took a deep breath, her expression slowly relaxed when she observed her surroundings.

"Uh… I, that one, this one…"

"Please speak clearly. You are the one who told me that 'if we stayed at the dorm only death awaits us'. I already know that your prediction abilities are true. This is really great, if only you could be more confident…. 'We could only last till yesterday if we stayed at the dorm. Only if we managed to cross the teaching office and reached the guest house on the hill then we won't be completely annihilated', this is the best future you saw right?"

Just as Misaya Ouji said, I had the ability to predict the future. Just as Azaka Kokutō and Misaya Ouji revealed their powers, Shizune Seo revealed hers as well.

"Ah, so that was it. I always had this feeling before. Shizune was always like a puppy, sometimes she would be like a cat, suddenly staring at a spot unmoving."

That above was her roommate, Azaka Kokutō's comment.

Even though it was an exaggeration, Shizune Seo was just an average looking girl that could be found anywhere. She had short hair that was uncommonly found in Reien Girls Academy, as well as an average body height and weight… Even so, she was loved by her seniors for reasons such as 'she's a late bloomer in every aspect. That's why she's cute'.

My hometown is in the northeast, the only daughter of a brewery that has been open since the Edo era. Even though my ability to view the future is produced from my brain, for further details please head to another story to understand better.

Now the main point is that I am able to see the future…which is also the ending.

Today's evening. Shizune Seo told her friends that were lucky to still be alive about her ability to see the future. They believed her… or you can say, that the powers had saved them countless times, so they had to believe her… they started to head towards the guest house which was the only desperate way out of the deathly ending.

"The only way to make it out alive is to get to the guest house !"

The only thing they could do is to risk their lives for that ambiguous prediction.

"Ahwaaa, but it's impossible! Especially Misaya-senpai! I could only see senpai 'ha-gu' from a bunch of zombies!"

"Why is it just me?! And what does 'ha-gu' mean? Is it the sound of getting bitten? Or is it 'hug'?!" Misaya-senpai tried to protect her body in a state of panic. I also hate the ending where she would become a zombie.

"We won't be able to kill all of them if we only rely on Misaya-senpai! If their hearts are not destroyed they will not stop! See, the bunch just now is not entirely dead! Our encirclement is turning smaller by the second!"

"How uncivilized. Just like Kokutō-san's demonstration!?"

Misaya-senpai ran towards Azaka Kokutō.

She was more useless than me when she used up her fairies. The decision of 'it would be wiser to hide behind Azaka Kokutō who possessed strong advanced capabilities' was just right, which caused me to tear up.

"Hey, why did you run back?! I thought you could run away by yourself?"

"I, how could I just abandon my kouhai! I can carry Seo-san, Kokutō-san will just be responsible for those guys that are dripping viscera!"

"Uwah, that's gross. Why didn't you blast off their heads? Even though those fairies self-destructed, if you aimed for their head they would be dead!"

“…That’s because compared with a smaller target, which is the head, a large torso would be easier to aim right?”

“Oh, so you are not confident with your own accuracy!”

Azaka Kokutō crossed her arms in front of her face; her stance leaned forward slightly before she dashed forward.

As if the bell rang for the boxes to advance towards their opponents.

She dashed into the group of zombies, using her left hand; she gently pushed away a reckless attack from a zombie while her right hand smashed into its face.

Fireballs burst out in the darkness.

Azaka Kokutō's right fist, even though without the ability to destroy the skull, was able to cause things to be ignited. The temperature could reach 2000 Celsius and above. The brain immediately turned into ashes which caused the corpse to stop moving. Even though the other parts of the zombie were destroyed it could still move, but if the brain is mostly damaged, it will turn back into a corpse.

“Ha, ha, ha….”

However, Azaka-chan, who managed to defeat the zombies, became tired.

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Even though her ability to light things on fire won’t cause her to be fatigued, she had to be within the distance that the zombies could touch her, and they are opponents that may not be defeated in one hit. So when there’s a conflict, a girl like Azaka Kokutō will have a hard time when they compare strength. She may be overpowered and bitten in no time.

A one on one fight always has the risk of death. If she were to be ganged by at least 3 zombies, Azaka Kokutō’s advantage would most probably be gone.

This caused her to be really tired. The extreme stress, as well as the reality of killing those humanoids and staying alive, all of them ate away at her strength and spirit.

You can say that our situation was really bad.

3 young girls that had their eyebrows furrowed.

The group of zombies that had their numbers well over 30 that are surrounding them now.

“We have almost reached the final chapter now. Are you able to see the future now, Shizune?”

“…Azaka-chan, that one…”

“You can use this time to lie that ‘I could see my cute classmate win’ that I could consider you as a really considerate friend… but this matter-of-fact situation can’t be of any comfort.”

“Misaya-senpai… I apologize for not being very smart. Also to tell you the truth, I feel that senpai is really cute when you curl your hair.”

I thought about the past events in the Reien Girls Academy, which caused me to begin laughing. Even though I was in this situation, no, it was because I was in this situation; I was able to reveal all my emotions which I bottled up.

“…Ha. Even though I don’t want to say this, there are no more ideas. Kokutō-san, while we go to deal with the zombies at the teaching office, we’ll allow Seo-san to use this opportunity to run into the building, how’s that?”

“Misaya-senpai?!”

“How about this? I can deal with the two on the left and right and meet up with Shizune. The only one that will die in vain is you, senpai.”

“Well, whatever you say. I still have some trump card I haven’t used yet, the only one that will be turned into a zombie is you.”

“Uwah, you are such a trustworthy senpai! How many trump cards do you have actually?”

“Whatever you say. Skillful women have unlimited trump cards.”

The encirclement slowly shrinked.

The two girls made mental preparation before they tried to break through the situation they found themselves in.

The girl that could see the future gave them a pained expression.

“Uh, Azaka-chan? Excuse me for interrupting you and Misaya-senpai, but there’s a change in the future. The fireball that Azaka-chan made just now seems to have attracted Asagami-san.”

Something ‘strange’ happened when the other 2 were about to react to that statement.

There was a loud sound.

Everything around them, zombies and the woods included, started to tremble, and bent.

The dust flew into the air, the trees were destroyed. The zombies were bent out of shape and could not move.

I, at that moment, understood fully ‘that earthquakes will not only affect the earth, the air – as well as space can also be affected as well’.

“Everyone, please don’t move from your spot, I think I overdid it by a little bit.”

A sound made by humans came from the other side of the woods.

It came beyond the fence of the teaching office.

A girl wearing the Academy’s uniform emerged into the lighting.

There was suddenly the sound of drums in my head.

It was as if there was fog that caused her debut to be more dramatic. Azaka Kokutō and Misaya Ouji’s powers are known as ‘magic’, while Shizune Seo’s future sight is known as ‘superpowers’ of biological functions.

However, she was the combination of both. Or you could say she’s an abnormality

That was the Reien Girls Academy’s pride and young lady with a traditional look that has the power to distort the physical law and bend things. Her power level and bust size were unrivaled, Fujino Asagami….!

“-- -- Please bend.”

She said it in an ominous tone.

The surface of the earth started to roll upwards.

The forest that surrounded us started to distort, knead, and tighten all the corpses into a big blob.

…That scene looked like it came out of somewhere when the world ended. Even though this description was quite weird, you could imagine the world now being a picture, and it was kneaded into a mess by invisible hands.

These were the mystic eyes of Fujino Asagami.

No matter how big or hard the object was; she would be able to bend them if she saw them, it was a veritable power.

Now, the corpses couldn't move anymore because they and the trees were rolled up like slices of cheese.

We ran across the earth that changed into a flat surface again to meet up with Fujino Asagami.

"Asagami! You saved us, thank you!"

"I apologize; I should have met up with you earlier."

Fujino Asagami had an apologetic smile on her face.

Her face was pale. The 'bending' just now made her use a lot of her mental energy.

Even though the scale was different, regardless if it was bending or future sight, the whole brain still needed to perform calculation. As for mental energy, it is better to refer to it as a burden, because it causes wear to the brain and takes up calories. Future sight only needed to replenish its user's glucose level to be used again, however if it was at the power level of Asagami-san's bending powers, the burden would be directly reflected on the user…. Worst case scenario, after she uses her bending abilities, she will not exist anymore.

The weapon that contained the highest power level but consisted of many constraints…. That was the role of Asagami-san. I can explain that in detail as well.

"…I am really sorry. This is actually really depressing. I am just like an

undead; my perception of reality is distorted. That was why I could destroy both humans and the ground as easily as destroying paper. However, even though this is a curse, it could still be used now. Please allow me to lend you a hand." ---- 7 days ago, she confessed everything to us.

"Really, you gave us a lot of problems Asagami-san. You were separated from us when we ran from the dormitory, and we were really worried about you as well. Looks like you overexerted yourself when you said that you could 'see really well in the dark'."

Misaya-senpai gave a little 'hmph' while she complained. However everyone knew that she was not afraid when she was in trouble, but it was expressed because she was worried about Asagami-san.

"I had caused you some trouble… I was interested in the huge bunch of corpses at the dorm…. There were so many of them, so I should be really lucky…"

"….So, you came back again, and stayed at the dorm, Fujino?"

Azaka-chan took a couple of steps backwards.

"That's right. That was why the numbers were considerably less than before, you can say it was killing two birds with a stone."

Asagami-san's face had a 'did I do well' grin.

…This person that was ladylike, a traditional Japanese looking girl that puts others ahead of her first, sometimes could be more bold and ruthless than us.

"Let's get to safety first in the teaching office. There should still be food in the office, I also had the keys."

Misaya-senpai led the way into the teaching office. We wanted to find out if anyone was accidentally bitten or not to make sure that everyone was safe.

◆

Reien Girls Academy. A catholic school with full boarding style that had a long history, just like a sterilized room, the girl academy was totally separated from seculars and current trends.

Situated on a mountain far from the downtown, the land was mostly covered with thick woods.

Using the exemption methods of entry, the teaching office was separated into junior high and senior high. Due to that there were close to 600 students who lived there, so it was not too much if you said that the academy was a convent. The school uniform usage of the Sister's clothing as a base also received praise from the general public.

The academy currently had less than a few handfuls of survivors left.

The situation should be explained starting from the morning eight days ago. Or more accurately you could say it was ten days before the end of the world, due to that the school was so isolated, the students could only receive news from the outside world from the Sisters themselves, and sometimes it could be incorrect.

Things started to change 2 days later.

One morning, a few outsiders tipped the school gate and invaded the school grounds.

The few Sisters that went to warn them ended up not returning at all. The outsiders then turned towards the senior high division. From that moment onward, the 60 year history of the Reien Girls Academy ended.

In summary, the outsiders that invaded the academy were patients.

◆

The disease robbed the humanity of those patients; they stopped breathing, lost their ability to carry out metabolism, which caused their heart to stop beating, and their blood stopped circulating, which led to the body rotting.

The scariest part was, even though the victim died, the body still can move. They will drag their rotting body and move about, using their god-knows-what instinct to find healthy human beings, tear their bodies apart; either using their teeth, or infect them using their saliva to increase their numbers.

According to the horror movies, they were referred to as the Living Dead.

Or commonly known as zombies.

They were referred to as infected.

According to Misaya-senpai, about half a year ago, there was already news about a ‘new generation of infected’. We only knew about it 8 days ago about how dangerous they were. That was obvious. The disasters at this level were always too late when you noticed it.

It was not even half a day, Reien Girls Academy was already filled with zombies. Was it lucky or unlucky? Azaka Kokutō and her gang were gathered at a special classroom where they escaped the crisis. When they recovered, the teaching building was already littered with pieces of flesh of students, and the infected students marched towards the junior high section.

Azaka-chan immediately offered to rescue her juniors, thus we all set off in that direction; after witnessing the reality first hand, we ran from the dormitory disconcertedly.

We accidentally bumped into Misaya-senpai. Even though she was there at the junior high section first, she was chased by a group of zombies and so close to being bitten.

At that moment, Azaka-chan and Asagami-san used their powers. At last, Misaya-senpai joined our little gang that would live or die together.

7 days after that, we stayed at the dormitory. A few hours ago, the future sight was useless….Shizune Seo saw the most horrible future. If before dawn they could not reach the guest house opposite of the senior high section of the teaching building, everyone would die in a horrible death.

That was why we were running away in the middle of the night in the woods.

“Excuse us… Ah, not a single soul to be seen. That’s alright, com'on everyone.”

“There’s still electricity left. Even though there’s no one at the power station it could still run for a while, so if there were no incidents that would happen, the power supply won’t be a problem for a short while.”

“This is the benefit of automation. But you should not turn on the lights, Shizune, we will be spotted by those guys.”

“We should be safe here. The guest house is just mere meters away, so we don’t have to rush. Everyone should be tired, just spend 30 minutes to

drink some tea."

"WOW. From mineral water to electric kettles, you are well prepared, Misaya-senpai."

"Senpai, are there snacks? I want some cookies, no matter how much I will pay you for it."

"That's alright. You were already broke…. The butter cookies are inedible now. There are a few macaroons left, but if it is in this state the taste is different. It was a specialty from Paris right?"

"FAUCHON! The specialty macaron from Paris are called fauchon!"

Everyone was purposely in a row. The macaroons, even though they were made from eggs, if stored in the fridge could still be eaten.

"Even though it's hard, if it is still sweet then it is alright. Here, Asagami-san, eat up."

"Thank you Seo-san. But I still have some nutritional supplements, everyone should have some. I had some but I don't know what the taste was like."

Asagami-san closed her eyes, revealing a smile that was happy yet troubled.

Aside from her powers, she was always filled with dignity and elegance. However, she closed her eyes because of the accident that happened a year ago, after that, her eyesight slowly became weaker. If she could be alone, she should still be able to see. Should.

The small tea party commenced; we began our 30 minutes of rest.

After so long, this could be our last supper. We concealed the fear we had in our hearts, and began to enjoy the hot black tea and hardened sweets.

Outside came some pattering sounds.

I remembered the night when the typhoon came when I was younger.

Under the shaking light, the student council classroom looked bigger than normal, what's more interesting is that you would feel that you are in a theater at that moment.

There were still people gathering and issuing messages on the internet, or appealing to the general public, however the government's report division

had no reply since 3 days ago. Or, this area was abandoned, or measures had been taken. Even so, this would have no effect on us. We could not imagine ourselves surviving, no, we could not even create that kind of future.

◆

The world that everyone took for granted already ended 10 days ago. From now on, it was to see who would die next. Even though the situation turned bad, they still could enjoy the tea party.

“I would still like to take a bath.”

“Kokutō-san, it was already a tacit approval.”

Asagami-san reprimanded Azaka-chan for her wisecrack.

Since they were roommates for so long, they could differentiate between a serious conversation and a joke without looking at each other's faces.

The young girls these days were like this, not even at the end of the world, or surrounded by zombies, or if all the students were dead, even though they almost got hurt, but it was equivalent to the problems felt by their bodies.

Even though they could withstand hunger, they could not stand the filth on their bodies. When they were in their dorms, the first thing that they would do was to collect their towels, water and wipes. This time it was a bit special. If there were to be a male among us, this kind of scene would be delayed.

“It’s a little hard to believe. Everyone else became a zombie, we were the only ones alive, and the future where we died before dawn, even a nightmare will have a limit…. Well, I also knew that it was wishful thinking.”

“Azaka-san is a dreamer. I firmly believe that this is a dream from the beginning.”

“That is really reassuring Misaya-senpai, may I ask why do you believe so?”

“You still need an explanation? There was no way that things could become like this. Zombies or anything, it should already be outdated. If it

was an infection, it should take half a year to one year for humans to be wiped out. It's been only 7 days, no, 10 days the world will end, this ending is impossible. And it should only take another half a year to take any measures against this. So, even though this is a reality, I will still strongly believe that this is a dream. If there are any errors, I as a human will strongly refuse to admit, this will solely be a dream."

No matter how impossible, Azaka Kokutō will only accept the truth; if the situation is impossible, Misaya Ouji will not accept that kind of truth.

Who was the dreamer and who was the realist, I cannot decide.

However, I can feel that they made the decision based on their own beliefs.

"That's right. I also feel that this is a dream. Even though it's not very accurate, this is still the first time my heart beat so excitedly."

Fujino Asagami, as if observing those two, silently smiled.

It was as if she had a different opinion.

"……"

I was being tormented by my conscience.

Shizune Seo was different from the others, she didn't reveal the truth.

When they reached there, a future did not exist anymore. I was ashamed to tell them.

Even though they were lucky to escape a BAD END, they already reached the end.

…..Because I was mistaken again.

Shizune Seo was careless again. The future scene 'reach the guest house at dawn' was the only thing she saw. However, this future could not be seen again.

"…I say."

No matter what, she could not see the future in 20 minutes.

No matter what the decisions that Fujino-san or Azaka-chan made were useless. Events will unfold like whirlwinds, bringing an end to everything.

“Seo’s future sight, it was just information processing at the end right?”

“Ah? W-what’s wrong, Azaka-chan?”

“I was talking about your future sight. Even though you said that you could see the image in the future, you didn’t think about the principle. So, your view is not actually paranormal, at the end, it is just a first person view right?”

“En, that’s right. The future I see is just what an average human can see through their naked eyes. I have never seen the future sight of the view from above like God.”

“How about the future of other people? For example, even though you are not in the scene of the future, are you able to see things in a 3rd person view?”

“…even though that’s really rare, I could still do it. But, that could only work if only the person in front of me. For example, Azaka-chan and I, I can view the future whether you are going to embarrass yourself or any other situations.”

That’s right; the so-called future sight was just an accurate prediction, and also an obvious reasoning.

Shizune Seo can only derive ‘the things that could happen after this moment’ after going through the information received by the 5 senses. The people that were categorized under seers are just people who had the brain capacity to perform the above.

“Ah---no wonder you would say weird things sometimes. ‘You should be late today’, ‘Don’t let Mikiya make a phone call today’ those kinds of things. Hm, I understand now. And also, thank you, you were always so nice to me, those were a really big help.”

It was as if she was reminiscing about her life as a student.

This was Azaka Kokutō, crisp and straight to the point, thanking you without a hint of slapdash.

Due to the nobleness of the gratitude, the atmosphere of the tea party became quiet and peaceful.

“However...”

A nervous voice disrupted the atmosphere.

“That could also mean that Seo already knew the answers. You saw the reasons we were killed. If it wasn’t so, you wouldn’t be able to see the future. It was either you could not recognize the reason, or you already forgot about it.”

“…either could not recognize, or forgotten…?”

What she said was the truth. In a lifetime, most of the time signs will be given for the answer before the time runs out. However, humans will miss out these signs and regret only after they find out about their failures. Bad endings don’t appear when it is too late, they appear when humans missed out these signals.

“This chat will have to end here Azaka-san. It is almost time to make a decision.”

Misaya Ouji prompted us to make a move.

◆

30 minutes had passed without us noticing.

Even though it was just a 10 minutes’ walk till the guest house , there were so many zombies wandering about on the way there.

Dawn was merely an hour away. The peaceful moment ended.

We exited through the emergency exit of the senior high division.

We used the flowerbeds as our cover and headed towards the guest house .

Under the lighting of the street lamp, we could spot several zombies.

“How lucky…! There seems to be only 4 zombies, we could potentially go around them…!”

“We are going around them…!? Why don’t we just let Asagami-san ‘bend’ them!?”

“No good. I will attract the attention of others after I ‘bend’ these. Their numbers are higher in the forest, if the others come at us like a tsunami, it will be troublesome…. If we were surrounded like insects attracted towards a light source, wouldn’t that be disgusting?”

“Uh… I don’t understand what Asagami-san’s reference was.”

“It should be referring to them as being really stupid. Fujino’s mystic eyes are like cannons, it is nothing towards the enemies that only know how to dash forward.”

“That’s right. Animals with intelligence will definitely retreat; zombies are the dead that don’t have any feelings. Even though they saw their own comrades have their necks bent in front of them, they will not feel any fear.”

Azaka-chan nodded at Misaya-senpai's statement.

“Ah?”

However Fujino-san opened her eyes that were always closed, clearly in shock.

“Uh?”

“Those ‘people’ should still have their intelligence, I think. Because they made the decision between ‘assimilate’ or ‘consume’ towards healthy living humans.”

“W-what does that mean?”

“I am referring to their methods of killing. The zombies will attack humans, but differentiate between ‘tearing the human apart before eating them’ and ‘killing them’.”

“The humans that were eaten will not even leave behind any bones, if just killing the humans they will turn into zombies. This will naturally be eating and reproducing. Wouldn’t that mean that those zombies use their own will to differentiate between ‘nutritious food’ and ‘food that can become one of them’?”

“Ah… No, that is correct… But how could that be true? Fujino, are you saying that they are not entirely dead and brainless?”

“Who knows? I myself am not clear on that, but they should have some kind of intelligence. Regarding what kind of intelligence that is, only a zombie understands it better than us.”

This was as if trying to prove the existence of reincarnation. If you didn’t die once, you will never know, but when you die you are never going to tell anyone else. The view of the dead and the living is entirely different, even though they were humans, they could not communicate with each other.

“I think these ‘people’ are not just mindlessly eating human flesh, but to

expel a different race? Becoming a new race of primates of this world?"

"….Are you saying that they are not zombies but a new kind of humans? That is so primitive. I wouldn't think that they have any kind of intelligence."

"That is also helpless. Those 'people' are like 10 day old beings that were newly born. No difference from a baby."

"_____"

Everyone was speechless.

Nobody had ever thought of that before. Fujino Asagami's view changed the concept of humans towards zombies. Zombies even have thinking capabilities; they lack moderation, just like a one year old toddler.

However, till now, killing a zombie was equivalent to killing a live "human".

"…I am sorry. Are you feeling any better, Azaka-san?"

"…A little. Even if we know more about the opponent's situation nothing has changed. 10 days ago, life here has become nothing but killing to survive."

"……"

"…Well, if this hypothesis is correct, we should have some sort of hope. Even though it is a little childish, in time there should be a day where we could communicate with each other."

The reactions among the 4 of us were different.

Due to Fujino Asagami's words we wasted more time than expected. There were only 20 minutes left from the future.

We made a decision to rush from the front.

From the slope towards the guest house , through the 4 scattered zombies.

The woods on both sides of the slope still had dozens of zombies; we wanted to rush up the hill, straight into the guest house and shut the doors.

There was about 200 meters of sprint.

Azaka Kokutō and Misaya Ouji, who were used to running, will have no problem.

However Shizune Seo and Fujino Asagami… may only have 50% chance of surviving.

“…Seo, can you see it?”

“…No problem. The sun rises at the guest house , I can see it clearly.”

I didn’t mention it was a lie.

“Ok, let’s go. Let me handle the zombies on the slope. I will first close the distance and let out a few punches---What the!?”

Azaka Kokutō suddenly yelled out. Shizune Seo and Fujino Asagami that were behind her suddenly paled as if they had seen a ghost.

On the hill, stood a shadow that does not match well with the scene.

The other 3 zombies were definitely ex-Reien Girls Academy students, however, the other one, is a black haired girl wearing white long-sleeved kimono.

As if she just finished her New Year’s prayers.

Even though she was a zombie, the deep black eyes still contained consciousness and intelligence.

Her right hand, an unsheathed knife gleamed with light.

◆

“Th-that? That person, is it Ryougi-san?”

“No matter which way you see it’s that Shiki asshole! She’s still wielding a katana! We are so dead…!”

“Ah, she just grinned! She saw us!”

That’s right, Shiki Ryougi entered the battlefield.

What kind of person she is, I still did not know. Because I didn't have a chance to get to know her. How much I knew about her, is just within these 7 days whenever Azaka Kokutō and Fujino Asagami mentioned her.

"If it was Shiki, even though her opponent is a zombie, it would be no problem. She's so scary that she could be friends with them."

"Even though I don't want to see her, if Ryougi-san was here, we would feel safer. That person is undefeatable."

"That's absolutely right. I don't want to say this, but if Shiki was here the situation would be easily handled."

They were talking as if she was invincible.

That invincible person was now among the zombie ranks, the final BOSS battle is now in front of us. Azaka-chan and Asagami-san's hopelessness, even I who was standing behind them could feel it.

"Hmm~ That person named Shiki, how powerful is Seo-san?"

Misaya-senpai, who had only just seen Shiki Ryougi, was sarcastic.

"Hm, that one…"

I couldn't come up with anything so I just looked anywhere else but Misaya-senpai.

"To be honest, it was as if King Arthur was wielding the Excalibur."

"So that means we absolutely cannot win this."

Suddenly came some footsteps.

It was the sound of Shiki Ryougi's sandals stepping on gravel.

The first to react was Azaka-chan. She used the fear on our faces to act as a catalyst, dashing forward alone.

"If it's this kind of situation, there won't be anything that holds me back anymore! Let us settle our resentment once and for all!"

Azaka yelled out 'revenge for my brother' while she rushed forward.

Misaya-senpai panicked and followed her, the rest of us were shocked, rooted to the ground.

Fujino Asagami slapped her own face, looked at Shizune Seo and said:

“---Shizune-san, you will head to the guest house from the woods, I will help you attract the attention of the zombies.”

Even though Asagami-san did not have any future sight, she understood the situation.

Azaka Kokutō was beheaded first.

Misaya Ouji could only watch before getting beheaded.

The slope was inaccessible because of that woman.

So, even though the forest was dangerous, it was the one and only way to reach the goal.

“Run quickly. I don’t want to affect Shizune-san.”

Her voice was very calm, she wouldn't allow any rebuttals.

“…I will head there first and wait for you at the guest house .”

I ran.

At the moment Shizune Seo blended into the forest, the slope was bent.

Fujino Asagami and Shiki Ryougi.

Both were users of the mystic eyes, they began their last battle.

And then, I reached the guest house .

This is the westernized building that was based on Rokumeikan. Apparently, due to the western influence there were a lot of these kinds of buildings that were built, but most of them were just a copy. The finished buildings were mostly mixed with some of the Japanese aesthetics, this is one of those buildings.

Now it was entirely unrecognizable.

There were only burned ruins after the walls. There were rumors about something similar. There was an arson that caused one of the dormitories to be burned to the ground.

“….Ah, in the end…”

This was similar to what I had seen, I murmured to myself.

My footsteps faltered through the rubbles on the hill.

Shizune Seo's scene of the future was exactly 'looking at the sunrise from the guest house '.

"…That's right. The night 3 days ago, I could see some light coming from the dormitory's window."

Shizune Seo did not realize that it was from the fire. She was as if a camera without its own will, captured all the answers, she could only notice the parts that she was interested in. Only noticing the things that she wanted to know about, she was very human, hopelessly degrading/ improving.

I slumped to the ground.

I kneel on the highest point of the ruins, as if I had given up everything and looked at the sky.

A knife came from Shizune Seo's back and held against her neck.

"■■■■■■■ , ■■■■■■■■ ? "

It was Shiki Ryougi. But I did not understand a word she said.

So, to avoid any confusion it shall be translated. (This is translated from the original)

"You are one of the onsets of the disease. So, you are better than those bastards running around. Well, even though I will kill those that were infected."

Confused. I looked at my left hand.

There was the bite mark of a zombie. Zombies were able to differentiate between food and comrades by themselves, so they used different methods to kill humans.

Comrades were those that will become zombies after being infected.

Food was those that were unable to become a zombie even after being infected.

But how did they differentiate between those two?

“Whatever, judgments were already made. Because 10 days ago, all the humans were already infected. This infection’s incubation period is very long. If the infected numbers did not reach 7 billion it would not have any effect.”

…That could also mean every human being in the world was infected at the same time with the flu?

“Ah. The viruses are also living things that will do anything to multiply. But due to their structure they are unable to do whatever they want. Due to that they can only multiply in the human body, but because of this multiplication that other human beings will want to destroy them.”

The disease that was spread among humans that will not be able to destroy mankind.

But if it was like that, within 7 days humans will be entirely wiped clean. From the beginning we were just fighting in a world that was going to die.

“The end of the world is only like this. When you noticed that something was wrong it was already too late. 7 billion humans collectively gave up. It was so easy to snatch the world.”

So from the beginning, Shizune Seo and her friends fought and gained friendship within these 7 days were for naught, just like dirt on film.

“___”

Even though she could not understand the language, the meaning was conveyed.

Shizune Seo cried while she prayed.

There was a hissing sound.

The glorious sunlight shone at my feet.

As if the monsters that turned into ash in the sunlight, everything turned into dust.

This was also a kind of World End.

I closed my eyes silently.

第二回　【14：00～16：30】

/ Chapter 2
14:00~16:30

/ 01.

----It was as if she had heard someone calling out, Shizune Seo opened her eyes.

The time just passed 7pm.

She picked herself up from the high-grade leather sofa and gave a little yawn.

“…I really fell asleep… One person in the whole cinema, how boring…”

This was a home theater which is as big as a classroom.

Shizune Seo, the only audience, was really bored and finally fell asleep, the projector quietly played a film that was not really popular.

The screen was playing a horror thriller.

It was about a group of school girls that was trapped in the mountains, surrounded by zombies.

Shizune Seo watched till the end with an air of unconcern. To be more precise, because it was too gory that the attention of the movie had changed.

The speakers were playing BGM.

Even though the speakers were really loud, her heart was unusually calm.

It must be due to the sound being too unrealistic. If there is only one person in the theater, no matter how loud the speaker is, you won't feel that it was crowded.

Shizune Seo absently watched the unentertaining tragedy.

"…I thought that we already agreed on watching this movie together…"

But nobody came. The promise with Shizune Seo was completely negligible for the girls staying at the dorm.

Well, everyone should be tired, I thought optimistically.

It should be almost dinner. Should proceed to the kitchen to prepare some food. However, I didn't have the energy to do anything at that moment, so I just continued to watch the horror movie that I didn't even like in a trance.

The projectors sound.

The air conditions sound.

The fluorescence that was traversed in the dark room.

The surround sound played the horrified scream of the main actor.

….Also, other than the speakers, there was someone else's scream that came from outside the room.

"Really, in the end it really turned out to be this way."

I sighed while getting up from the comfortable sofa.

"If everyone didn't gather at the projector room, there will be a murder."

I had already warned them about this kind of future, this bunch of people that gave me a headache. Shizune Seo pouted and left the projector room.

Because, it was also this kind of bad end. This kind of future. This kind of result.

We yet again lost our goal, we made life threatening mistakes on our way forward.

/ 02.

I walked out of the projector room; the sound of the rain came from outside the building. It was 7 o'clock at night. The sunlight was not visible, and there was a limited amount of lights around, so most of the corridor was pitch black.

The corridor was interwoven with lights from manmade sources and the darkness of the night.

It was an ocean of multicolored, or you can also say it was like the curtains used during the funeral, both colors mixing together.

The corner of the corridor was abnormally bright; it was only here that was as dark as when you were in a cave.

I turned right immediately after leaving the projector room, walked past the corridors on the North side, headed towards the way that could access the lounge on the first floor. At the same time, due to my habit of memorizing insignificant small details. Such as the lights of 3 rooms during the way towards the foyer were not turned on.

This is the guest house of the Reien Girls Academy, Natsumi Hall.

The western-style building was built onto an area of 300 square meters, and the hall… is very fitting with the name of snake, a theme park with a quirky style.

The first floor of Natsumi Hall had guest rooms, while the second floor contained entertainment facilities.

There were 9 guest rooms on the first floor, but the links in between the rooms were really peculiar. Imagine one side of a cube. Divide the cube into 9 equal parts, with 3 rooms in each vertical and horizontal plane.

If it was just like that, you can say that it was really rare.

The most unusual part is the way the rooms were connected. The room in

the center was room number 0 followed by the rest around it. From the top it is designed to be like a curled up snake. For example, for the person staying at room 1, they needed to get through from room 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and also, the locks were from the other side, so you had to get the person living in the rooms to open the door. To get back to your room would use up a lot of energy. Even though there was a universal key, it was thrown into the furnace by the previous owner during its completion.

It was a deliberate defect in the structure.

It was more emphasized than the comfort of life.

There was a rumor that the fanatic architect by an alumnus built the building according to the request of ‘mysterious atmosphere of a stage that could be targeted by murder’. It was either the person who made the request or accepted the request that had an incurable disease.

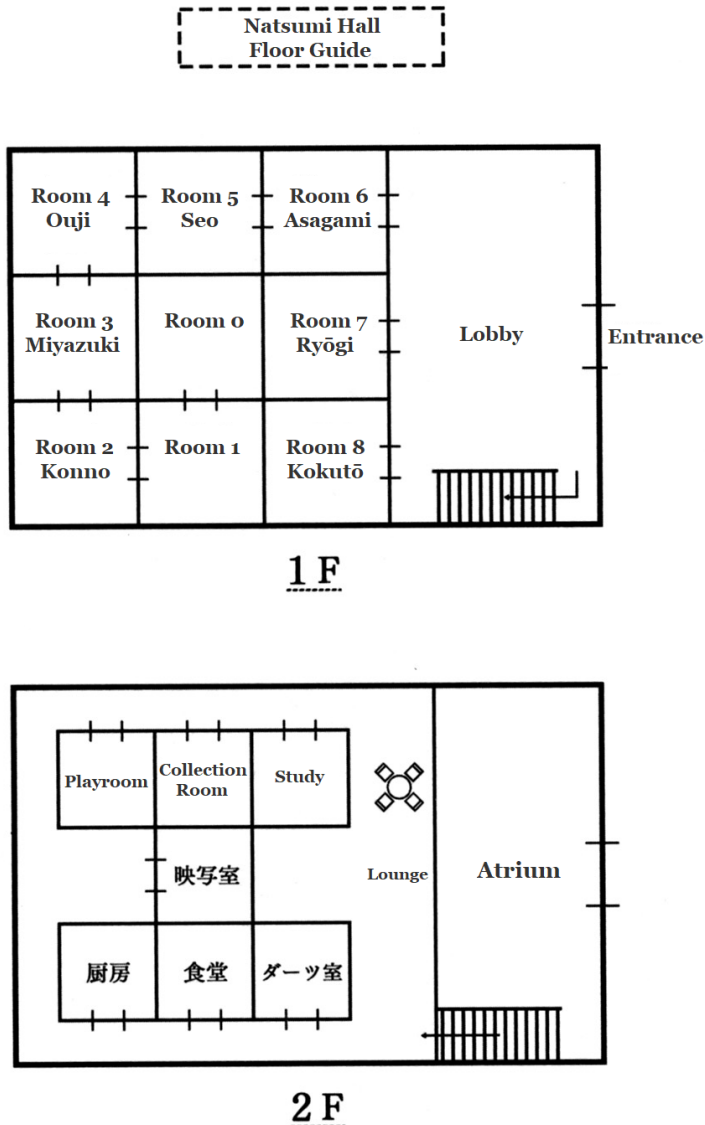
This year was the 7th year since the completion of the building.

For example, if there were 8 people staying in the rooms simultaneously, the snake god would kill everyone.

For example, the confinement of the illegitimate child of the Ouji clan.

For example, a Chthulhu that could destroy worlds that were sealed in the basement, and other supernatural stories.

However this time, everyone that was putting up for the night were gathered at the first floor foyer.



Needless to say, Shizune Seo just reached the foyer.

Azaka Kokutō, Asagami Fujino, Risu Miyazuki, Shiki Ryougi were in the same year as Shizune Seo.

As well as Misaya Ouji who was in senior high and former president of the student council.

In total there were 6 young ladies, silently staring at each other.

"____"

The instant I witnessed this, I felt headache-like dizziness.

Shizune Seo was forced to see the most horrible future-----after 10 hours from now, 5 o'clock before dawn the next day, the illusion of her death.

"… I heard a scream just now, what happened, Shiki-chan?"

I adjusted my emotions before speaking to Ryougi Shiki.

"Hm, something troublesome happened. We were waiting for you, Shizune-san. Because we heard one among us was killed." Ryougi-san smiled, her entire look filled with contrived elegance.

After 'that' happened during summer, Shizune Seo and Shiki Ryougi became pen pals.

This time, Shizune Seo came to Natsumi Hall due to her sincere invitation. After all, the guest house was prohibited for students.

"….That-----one. Someone was murdered? That was not a joke right"

"Of course it was real. At this point of time no one would laugh at a murder even if it was a joke."

That was a bit outdated… Ryougi-san was as elegant as a butterfly at that moment and maintained her faint smile.

"Right, that was everyone. Let's go back to the scene of the crime. Maybe some people may not want to follow, but it is also fair. No matter how you complain later it will only be a waste of time."

Kokutō-san used an unquestionable tone to make a conclusion. She, Reien Girls Academy's number one prodigy, was born with an air of leadership.

“….was the person really dead? Did you see it wrong?”

Asagami Fujino-san asked the question humbly. She looked like a Japanese doll, born with a frail body, she could only walk with crutches. It was rumored that her eyes were injured a year ago, but she could still somewhat see.

“Very good. That was very good Asagami-san! The murder at the cursed hall, it feels like a Pandora PV! My main character's powers are going to increase again! Now let’s end in gorgeousness again!”

The person that was singing while spinning in circles was Ouji-senpai that everyone loved. She couldn’t read the atmosphere, hence this level of noisiness everyone had already experienced before.

“…Sigh. Ouji-senpai’s optimistic-ness is a cure at this moment. Even though it makes you a little bit annoyed, it also lifts everyone's spirits.”

Risu Miyazuki-san mumbled to herself. Even though her looks were not as good as compared to Ryougi-san and Kokutō-san, her eyes revealed firmness. This allowed others to have a feeling of ‘honesty, yet she would hit you back if you forced her’.

There were a total of 6 people in the foyer.

Azaka-san said, “Everyone’s here”. Thus, the 7th person that was not there….staying at Room 2 Fumio Konno-san, that was the one that was sacrificed.

◆

/ 03.

We were walking from the foyer to Asagami-san’s Room 6. From here, we went through rooms 5, 4 and 3 which were temporary corridors, and arrived at the scene of the crime at Room 2.

At the moment we walked into Room 2, the horrible sight caught everyone’s attention.

The whole room was pitch black.

No, more accurately, it was burned till everything became like that.

I indirectly thought about a canvas that was colored entirely with charcoal. There was an incident in the past when a building in Reien Girls Academy was entirely burnt down.

“Even though her whole body was almost burnt until it was unrecognizable, you could still recognize her stature. Konno-san’s height was 176cm, which is completely true.”

Azaka Kokutō stood in front of items that could be the victim’s belongings and reported to us.

In this room that was completely burnt, Fumio Konno’s body lay in the middle of the room.

She was completely burnt; at the place that she could have fallen onto was a thin black layer. It was the same as the ashes gathered on the ceiling, I heard someone mutter. Konno-san, who was good at basketball, was the only female student with this height. Among us, there were none that had her height, so it was determined that the body was Konno-san’s.

We silently observed the situation in the room.

Asagami-san and Miyazuki-san, who used to look honest, were passionately investigating. It was as if we declared to not forgive the arsonist… The criminal left spider web traces of clues in the room.

“Even though the cause of death is unknown, from the burnt marks from the fire it’s apparent that it happened between 4-6pm.”

Ryougi-san plainly said.

“Well, would it be too early to say that the cause of death is due to the fire?”

Misaya-san gingerly examined Konno –san’s body while retorting. Her boldness before was just a show.

“She could be already dead before the fire. Such as being hit by a blunt weapon, stabbed by a sharp weapon, or ingesting poison before burning to death, those kinds of possibilities.”

“Hm, just as Shiki-chan said. Any conclusion made now is still early. We still have no way of examining the body; we are just guessing now.”

I already knew the actual future and was not just guessing. But I can’t say it out loud.

Even though I proclaimed that ‘I could see the future’, it could only raise suspicion. Right now, the only person who knows that Shizune Seo is a seer is Misaya Ouji.

“…We cannot determine the killing method. Being burnt to this state is no different from dissecting a frog… However, I think we could still determine the killer. Is that right, Kokutō-san?”

Fujino Asagami smiled and glanced at Azaka Kokutō.

That smile sent chills down the backs of the rest of us.

“…What are you trying to say? Are you suspecting that I did it, Asagami-san?”

“I am just stating the obvious. The guest rooms of this hotel are arranged in such a way that the number is ascending from the inside outwards. The ones that could enter the crime scene are Konno-san in room 3, or Kokutō-san staying in room 1?”

Indeed, that was solid evidence, or rather it was an obvious exclusion method. Even though the motive and method were unknown, the number of suspects will be narrowed down if one would refer to the clue about the people who have the ability to enter the room. Due to the strange design of the hotel, the number of suspects was reduced down to 2 people.

“Hmph, what nonsense are you sprouting Asagami-san. Could you be more specific when referring to the situation, please? It should be that the only way that I could enter room 2 is only through the permission of Konno-san, however Kokutō-san could just quietly open the door and sneak in without Konno-san noticing right?” Miyazuki implied.

“Hey, I didn’t notice that yet. You’re really observant, Miyazuki-san.”

“E-even so, slow down a bit please. There was no one else that entered room 2?”

“I’m sorry, your theory is not plausible Kokutō-san. I could be sure of that when I was in room 4. There was no one that went through my room from 4 o’clock till now. No one will be able to escape my gaze that is like a hungry lioness pacing the room.”

“After that, Miyazuki-san and Kokutō-san reached Ouji-san’s room door at half past seven right? They later ran out from room 3 in a panic-stricken state after discovering Konno-san’s body.”

“That’s right. Their faces were very serious, saying ‘something bad happened, please gather everyone quickly’. That was why we first headed to the lobby and met up with Asagami-san and Ryougi-san.”

That’s right. The scream that I heard just as the song ended should be from Miyazuki-san after she discovered the body. It was just like I was in a zombie movie.

“…That’s wrong. That one, it’s…”

“Well. Ouji-san’s action was more suspicious than ours. Why is senpai restless, wandering in circles in the room in the first place? You said you were like a lion, but at most you were like a lost squirrel.”

“Uh… I was troubled when Shizune invited me to watch a movie. It was a rare chance that someone kindly asked me out, so it could not be rejected. But it was a horror film…. Yeah, it’s not very educational.”

“….Aah, you are actually scared… Ouji-senpai is a scaredy-cat that only knows how to act tough.”

“Exactly, I heard that she was extremely opposed to coming here as well.”

“Isn’t that great? Ouji-senpai is so popular among the lower year students because she acts like a princess, though it does annoy the heck out of others.”

“Yup, you’re spot on.”

“Hm, not bad.”

“Are you making fun of me?!”

Darn, it was not the time to bully Ouji-senpai.

We should contact the police first… But that was not probable. The only tool of communication is the phone of the staff office in the entire Reien Girls Academy. But we cannot leave now partly due to everyone agreeing on not opening the hotel’s entrance.

“The situation is like this in the end. Why don’t we stay here for the night, and we’ll get help later in the morning?”

“Alright. I agree with that. What about the killer? Shall we punish the suspects?”

“Punishment… As in we constrain and lock them up?”

“Hey, that is murder! If left defenseless in this situation, it would be so easy to be murdered! You guys want me to be the 2nd victim?!”

Kokutō-san words were intuitive remarks as she was a mystery maniac.

“However, this is the best way to control the situation; you might as well give it up. Everyone else will sleep better if you are tied up.

Asagami-san was always merciless when it came to Kokutō-san.

At that moment, Miyazuki-san raised her hand.

“…I have a suggestion. I will stay here with Kokutō-san for the night. ‘Here’ as in our rooms. Ouji-senpai will use her cupboard to block the door for one night. As for Kokutō-san and I… I’ll stay in room 1, Kokutō-san will sleep in room 3. That way, Kokutō-san that’s the most suspicious, won't have a way to leave room 3. When it’s morning, I can head to room 3. How’s that? It will be an entirely locked room right? Seo-san and the others will be able to sleep peacefully, and I can be rest assured.”

That is a pretty good idea. The idea of temporarily turning room 3 into an isolated room by making use of the fact that those rooms can only be locked on one side. (Please refer to the diagram if you are lost)

“What do you think, Kokutō-san?”

“….Since Miyazuki-san suggested it already, I can only agree to it, and we are both suspects as well. Alright, I’ll spend the night in room 3. Please remember to open the door to room 4 in the morning.”

Kokutō-san unwillingly agreed to it.

We went our separate paths later.

Miyazuki-son went to room 1, while Kokutō-san stayed in room 3.

The rest of us moved towards room 4 and used the cupboard and book rack to block the doorway. Later, we stayed at the lobby of the 2nd floor to continue our discussion.

◆

/ 04.

The time was 8 pm.

We were drinking tea made by Ryougi-san at the lounge on the 2nd floor.

The atrium was built in such a way that it was well ventilated; the lounge was designed to look like an indoor balcony. The lights from the atrium were bright enough to light it up and somehow lifted our mood.

“A murder case really happened. Although I should not say this, but this is too careless.”

Ryougi-san had a gentle smile on her face while she reached out for her cup. She was not affected in the slightest from the sinister situation.

“Are you not afraid, Shiki-chan? Or rather, are you not curious? This could be an impossible crime. Konno-san was murdered in a locked room, and the murder method is still unclear yet.”

“I am afraid. But I am not curious. No matter if it was Konno-san that ended up dead, or Kokutō-san or Ouji-senpai, it has nothing to do with me. I don’t care about things that are not interesting. If you really need to know, I am a little curious, no, I just want to know how the murder was done. How that room was burned, and how the fire was put out. It would not be possible from the point of view of a human being right?”

“Ah? I was certain the murderer was Kokutō-san because she has the ability to summon fire… She’s not the murderer?”

Asagami-san had not touched the tea that Ryougi-san brewed; she just drank from her own tumbler. It is said to be some form of greenish juice made from several green vegetables, which had an indescribable taste, with apples. Healthy!

“There is no way. A normal person won’t be able to spit fire, let alone set fire to everything that they touched.” Ryougi-san sat up in a cool way and denied.

“You could say that ” Asagami-san, being the most sensible girl in Reien

Girl Academy, said while revealing a smile that to others could mean acceptance, but seemed to hide a deeper meaning.

"…."

Misaya Ouji observed their conversation. However, her attention was not on Shiki Ryougi, but on Fujino Asagami.

"What's wrong, Ouji-senpai? Wasn't it you who suggested that everyone gathered here for discussion and tea?"

"Ahem, yes, that's right Seo-san. I wanted to discuss a countermeasure with everyone. I'll get straight to the point, who is the murderer among the other 2?"

"It must be Kokutō-san."

"Unfortunately, it is Kokutō-san."

Shiki Ryougi and Fujino Asagami immediately replied. Even though the 3 of them were not close, they still trust in each other.

"Is that so… What is your opinion, Seo-san?"

"I…"

Shizune Seo did not have the confidence to accuse someone as being a murderer in reality. Even though she could 'see the future', ultimately it is just a vision of 'the end'. It is not 'Azaka Kokutō, or Risu Miyazuki that killed Konno Fumio in this situation.

"I don't know…But I feel that the murderer could be someone besides them."

"Careful there, Shizune-san. What you just said means that 'the killer is among one of us'. I won't be merciful if you become my enemy."

"Yeah. No matter how cute of an animal Seo-san becomes, I will still eat you up in one bite."

"I, that's not what I meant, what I mean is…."

"There would be the presence of an 8th person. Am I right, Seo-san?"

"Ouji-senpai…! That's right. Isn't this like a repertoire of a mystery? Maybe there is a suspect X that has not revealed himself yet."

“That was too naïve…Do you have any evidence, Ouji-senpai?”

“….There is. Have you heard of the rumor about the undead disease in the Natsumi Hall?”

We shook our heads.

I had heard countless rumors about Natsumi Hall, but this is the first time I had heard of the ‘undead disease’.

“I accidentally overheard it at the Ouji house. The Natsumi Hall used to be a sanatorium. There was a young lady that was infected with a new kind of virus…immortality illness. There was a billionaire that pitied her misfortune. He adopted her and hid her in a hotel or some sort.”

“Immortality…which could be the undead disease right? It could be a good thing, right? No end to your life. You could be young forever, popular forever, forever continue on this way.”

“Who knows? Let’s not touch on the topic of immortality, if there was someone with a body that ‘could not die no matter what’, I feel that that is the most horrifying thing. Ah, so that’s a snake. The snake that was reborn from its shed skin is a symbol of infinity. But the ending should be unfortunate. Even though it is out of good will, in reality, after seeing an ‘undying’ person, the owner of the hotel was terrified, he did his best to seal off the devil… right?”

Ryougi-san said it elegantly as if she was singing, but there was a hint of earnestness. Even though she had little to no interest in finding the killer, she seemed happy when discussing weird rumors.

“…however, the hotel had been abandoned and handed over to the school? I don’t think there will be anyone like that here.”

“Of course. The owner of the Natsumi Hall passed away. There were no records nor documentation of the step daughter leaving the hotel though.”

“Are you implying that the girl with the undead illness is still here in the hotel…?”

“That is in the case or if the story is true…. Furthermore, you would know if you asked Miyazuki-san, so I’ll say it first. This Natsumi Hall is originally owned by Juzo Konno-san (绀野重造). Fumio Konno is his only daughter.”

“!”

Hold on. The motive to kill Konno-san appeared all of a sudden.

“---I understand now. It is becoming more and more interesting now. Please don’t stall it anymore, Ouji-senpai. You already knew the name of the undead girl right?”

Ouji-senpai nodded her head.

“Her name is Kanata Ishizue, she committed a series of murders 7 years ago. She could not be executed even though she was to be given a death sentence. … I don’t need to further explain the reason she was here. Konno used the condition that he donated a huge fund, took her from the hands of the high judiciary because she would not die no matter what.”

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/ 05.

It was already 10 pm when we weren’t aware of it.

We swallowed our saliva due to the unexpected turn of events.

Or rather, we were thirsty after having more than an hour of long discussion.

“Allow me to be the one to brew a pot of tea for everyone.”

Asagami-san left her seat and walked towards the kitchen on the 2nd floor.

…Asagami-san was not fazed at all by the tale we heard just now.

“Shiki-chan, do we need to accompany Asagami-san?”

“It’s alright, don’t worry about the female ‘terminator’. Let’s go back to the topic, Ouji-senpai. How did Miyazuki-san know about Konno-san’s situation?”

Ryougi-san asked while she leaned forward as if she’s trying to open some sort of curious switch.

“Miyazuki-san and Konno-san were roommates. They were really close and will discuss anything together no matter what. It seemed that Konno-san

was really proud this morning."

"They are here on a honeymoon or some sort."

Ryougi-san was disappointed.

"In the end, Konno-san did not meet the undead girl. The only one who knew about the undead girl should be Konno-san, who was killed… The next step should be…"

"….To enter the room that no one had entered before, or rather, the room that no one is able to enter, Room 0."

Room 0, located at the center of Natsumi's Hall, has a door that cannot be opened.

When everyone was deciding on the room this morning, Room 0 was already locked.

We thought that the room was just locked at that time. Now the situation has changed.

The guest rooms could only be locked from the inside.

If 'that thing' is still alive, who took the key to Room 0, what does the room look like?

"Let's ask Miyazuki-san . She should still be awake."

Ryougi-san stood up first.

"Please hold on. Let's wait till Asagami-san returns to head there together. She would be worried if we suddenly disappeared."

"That woman that traveled the Pacific Rim wouldn't be because of such a small thing----Hold on. Why would she stay here?"

"Huh?"

The pitch of our voices rose at the sudden question.

The reason for Fujino Asagami staying at the Natsumi Hall was….What was it again?

"….I also don't know about that. Do you know, Ouji-san?"

"I don't know. Now that I think about it, Ryougi-san, Seo-san, why did you

2 come to Natsumi Hall? I was here to collect bugs…No, I am here every day because I was collecting survey information of the area, what about you?"

"I am here because I was invited by Shiki-chan to spend the weekend together."

"That's right. I heard from someone that I know that no one could just casually use this place during the weekend, so I came. See, this is the invitation."

"That is the seal from the chairman, and it seems real. So, everyone else is here for the same reason?"

"…We didn't manage to verify the reason. I thought it was some sort of gathering going on the moment I saw everyone gathered when I arrived."

"…It seems that… Asagami-san arrived earlier than Ouji-san."

"Yeah, I came after noon. I was lost on the way here, thank goodness for Konno-san that I found my way here."

"!"

Asagami-san came back while holding a tray with tea for everyone.

She showed us her usual calm grin after placing her tray down.

"So, what is it?"

"Oh yeah, I was lost, that's why I was the last to arrive. ---Moving on, Asagami-san. Did Konno-san act weirdly to you? Did you happen to notice if she was nervous to see unexpected guests such as yourself showing up?"

"Who knows? I wasn't close to Konno-san, so I couldn't compare if she was any different from usual. However, she was cheerful while chatting with Miyazuki-san. Their conversation includes 'we had found the medicine, the illness could be treated' or something. I wasn't paying much attention at that time, I feel that there could be any special meaning to the conversation after discussing with you."

"That's the answer!"

We reposted.

"If this Ishizue or whatever her name is still here, wouldn't Miyazuki-san and Kokutō-san be in danger? Since room 4 was blocked and they cannot

escape.”

“I can’t wait anymore, let’s head to Room 0 now.”

We rushed towards the atrium.

The 1st and 2nd floors were connected through the stairs, located at the lobby of the 1st floor. Even though it is rather obvious, I will emphasize on it because it is rather important.

“Kokutō-san, are you still awake?”

Ouji-san immediately yelled when she was close to the door leading to room 3.

….There was no reply. We moved the blockage. The door wasn’t locked. Kokutō-san did not lock the door from the other side.

“…”

The first thing that came into view was the ball of yarn.

No, it is a human yarn ball.

Azaka Kokutō was sitting on the floor and had both her hands out, dead.

◆

/ 06.

“Is that the death kneel in the legends?”

There’s no such thing, Ouji-senpai.

“The reason of death is due to multiple wounds at the abdomen area. It could be due to penetration from metallic balls at close range.

Ryougi-san bent down to examine Kokutō-san’s body. She seemed to be pretty happy. She didn’t even show any sign to let poor Kokutō-san die in that… position… to have any peace.

“…The aggressive Kokutō-san was finished off so cleanly…The theory of

the killer in room 0 is becoming more and more real."

"W-what about Miyazuki-san?!"

Kokutō-san was already killed, so what about Miyazuki-san at room1?

"Let's hurry to room 1… It's locked! Miyazuki-san, please respond!"

There was no reply to the yelling.

"We have run out of options, please step away Seo-san, and let me think of a plan."

"Shiki-chan, the plan….ahhh?!"

Ryougi-san was suddenly wielding a katana in her hands.

She removed the katana from its sheath, pointed it towards the border between the wall and the door, and thrust the katana between the gap in the door where the lock was.

"There's no way. That's impossible."

Paka The blade snapped cleanly. Ryougi-san stuck out her tongue and gave an embarrassed smile. (テヘペロ)

"Hey!"

"Ahhh, Ouji-senpai, dodge! Or you'll die!"

"Uwa!"

"Ah, the broken blade is embedded onto Kokutō-san's back…"

Room 3 unexpectedly became a scene of carnage.

Fortunately, Ouji-senpai only lost a few strands of hair.

"…Shiki-chan…"

"Don't blame me. I think it's impossible even with Jigen-ryū (示限流)."

That's not the problem. The problem is you nonchalantly pulling out a katana.

"…sigh, there's no other way. The situation has forced me to use this method."

“Which method?”

Ouji-san took out something that resembled a Swiss Army Knife from her pocket and inserted the wire into the keyhole.

“O-ouji-san! Isn’t that a pick lock?”

“Be quiet. This is a hobby of a lady, lock-picking skills from the ‘lattice pie detective novels (新本格)’. This hotel was built after the war, so picking it up should be easy… it’s open.”

Ouji-senpai entirely ignored the rest of us that were shell-shocked, walked through the burnt room 2 and reached the door to room1.

“The structure should be the same. Give me a moment.”

Ouji-senpai unexpectedly kept the audiences on hold.

We watched the back of our senpai that became a little more reliable than usual.

Suddenly, the ringing of the clock could be heard from the atrium. It was 12 o’clock midnight , unknowingly. There were still 5 hours away from dawn, from the future that no one survives. If we could determine the killer and capture that person---at least we could change that future…

sound of lock opening “Well, that was easy… let’s open the door, is everyone ready?”

Ouji-senpai didn’t really have to ask any more questions.

What was the situation like in the room with Risu Miyazuki in it?

‘Think about the problem/situation first, and then face it with a conscious mind’, that is the advice from Ouji-senpai.

We nodded, ‘good’ she said and opened the door to room 1.

“-----”

When the sight of room 1 was in view, everyone had to suppress their gag reflex.

There was a masterpiece placed in the center of the room.

That was a body twisted to look like a screw.

Only the head was spared without a trace of blood; the bottom half of the body was as dry as a twig, completely drained of blood. It had the name of Risu Miyazuki.

“Miyazuki-san…”

She’s dead too. We were dizzy from the smell of blood, which came from the door of room 0.

“…the blockage at room 4 was still intact which means that the area was still considered a sealed room. The hiding place for the person that killed Kokutō-san and Miyazuki-san should be room 0.”

“That’s right. Are you still going to show off your skill, Ouji-senpai?”

“…Yeah. Even though I am really sorry, it is the only way. Let us reveal the truth about Natsumi Hall.”

Once again, Ouji-senpai headed towards the locked door.

I shifted my view and my gaze landed on a pale Fujino Asagami that was leaning on the wall.

“Asagami-san..? Are you unwell?”

“...Yes. The smell is too strong…. I am sorry, I shall return to room 2 to take a rest.”

Asagami-san shakily left room 1.

I was contemplating if I should follow her.

“Are you done, Ouji-senpai? This is your last chance to shine, are you able to do your best?”

“Tsk… It seems like this is the only modern lock….No matter…I shall use my 2nd special ability….Alright, it seems like the condition is met, it should work…! But it didn’t work…”

The exchange between Ryougi-san and Ouji-senpai seemed interesting. I decided to stay behind.

Ouji-senpai continued on her battle.

The only sound heard from this room that stank of blood was *kacha kacha*.

Shizune Seo laid the body of Miyazuki-san on the floor before covering it up with the bed sheet out of pity.

Just as she completed the work.

“…Alright!”

Ouji-senpai’s triumphant voice was accompanied with the sound of the door being unlocked.

The hinge of the door moved as the old metal door opened.

The inside was a gray hospital ward that was made out of cement.

---In the rectangular cell laid a,

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/ 07.

“Dead body.”

There laid a body that looked like a teenager around the age of 14 on a simple steel bed.

She was wearing a pure white wedding dress.

As if she was just asleep.

Or that she died peacefully in her sleep.

“…..”

Ryougi-san observed her with mild displeasure. Her expression was the disappointment as if of a young child waking up to empty Christmas socks on Christmas day itself.

“…Ryougi-san, is she dead?”

“Yes, her heart had definitely stopped even though there was no obvious

wound.”

“Didn’t she have the undead disease?”

“That’s right. However, it should have been treated, that’s why she’s dead. She finally had what she couldn’t before.”

“How could it…”

Ouji-senpai shakily leaned onto the wall.

“…..”

I was speechless. I thought I could finally see a specimen that would never perish, but once again I was disappointed.

“…In the end, the person that murdered Kokutō-san and Miyazuki-san was not the one that was cured from the undead disease… Is that correct?”

“…If you didn’t think that way, there won’t be any solution left, Ouji-senpai. Room 0 till room 3 were properly sealed rooms. The perpetrator could only be the person inside…”

Right, the only person left is this Ishizue-san. The body could only be this stiff after 20 hours. Our opportunity was just right, if it were to be another night, it would have started to rot.”

“Wait, hold on Shiki-chan. Are you saying that this person…”

“That’s right, the first victim. Kokutō-san, and even Konno-san was not killed by her.”

“____”

Who was the killer of these people?

There was no motive and method. However, if one would use the process of elimination----

“Wait. Shizune-san, where did that Cloverfield woman, Asagami-san go?”

“Oh… Asagami-san, she went to the floor below…”

Ryougi-san ran out towards the atrium without listening to everything.

We followed her…… When we were attempting to open room 0, Ryougi-san entirely ignored Asagami-san’s condition…!

“Asagami-san, where are you?! Come out quickly!”

Ryougi-san’s worried voice echoed at the atrium. There was no sign of Asagami-san at all, including the kitchen and canteen.

“Ahh, come to think of it”

I remembered the lights in the 3rd room at the northern side were on.

It had a sign on it that said ‘collection room’, with some kind of bad smell coming out of it.

“Shiki-chan, let’s head to the collection room!”

“That’s the exhibition room!”

We rushed through the pitch black corridor and reached the heavy wooden door.

The door was locked again, another sealed room. It is time for Ouji-senpai to shine.

Collection room, or known as the frame vault.

The walls were covered entirely with frames, while there were so many butterflies that filled those frames.

This is the exhibition room for insect specimens, no, thrift shop.

“Asagami, Fujino----“

That was the 5th body that used to have snow white skin, but was bitten by millions of poisonous bugs that turned the skin into patches of green.

The time now is 2 am.

There were 3 more hours till dawn, till the end.

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/ 08.

“__alright, let’s start.”

I made up my mind.

Shizune Seo, who could predict the future, was alone in the kitchen; she gave her cheeks a little pat to gain confidence.

/ 09.

3 am, lounge at level 2. Misaya Ouji and Shizune Seo, who couldn’t fall asleep, listened to the rain while drinking black tea to warm themselves up.

“Shizune-san, where is Ryougi-san…?”

She’s in room 7, because that’s the most suitable place to sleep. She said because Ishizue-san had already passed away, so there’s nothing fun to do anymore, and thus she went to sleep.”

“…sigh. That’s really troublesome, just like in the past. She was rarely motivated. While she was, it was only because of Ishizune, she entirely ignored the murders that happened.”

“Shiki-chan was really cold towards things that were not interesting to her, she was already like that since young.”

“Since young…? You knew Ryougi-san before, Shizune-san?”

“Yes. My house was next to Shiki-chan’s house. And at the same time, the other side was Kokutō-san’s house. I am going to have the same surname as Kokutō-san after I graduate.”

“Al-alright. Even though I don’t really understand that, it seems that you have a really complicated relationship.”

Ouji-san felt embarrassed and had to avert her eyes at the face that was filled with happiness. She didn’t predict that she would be fondly spoken to in this kind of situation.

“Is it not necessary to find the killer now? There are only a few of us left, senpai.”

“It’s alright. Because the killer was Asagami-san.”

Misaya Ouji gracefully sipped at the black tea and smiled.

The smile was more of a reassurance kind of smile, rather than a prideful one.

“Asagami-san was the killer…? But, she was….”

“That was suicide. She was probably backed into a corner, without a way out, thus she ate poison to kill herself. If not there won’t be any way to explain the locked room. The room was locked in, and there were no marks of struggles on the body… What else would it be other than suicide?”

“….but, it wouldn’t explain the other cases. If Asagami-san was the murderer, how did she killed Konno-san and the others that were in the sealed rooms?”

Ouji-san listlessly bowed her head.

After a few seconds of silence.

“Shizune-san. Even though it’s really sudden, it is ultimately my hypothesis. Do you believe in superpowers?”

“___, huh?”

Superpowers, I couldn’t help myself as I blinked my eyes when I heard those childish words.

Misaya Ouji that could read Shizune Seo unconsciously backed away. ..It could be because “She wouldn’t believe in it, so that’s for the better”. She was always like that, her kindness that could ruin herself.

“I apologize, let me phrase it in another way. Fujino Asagami has the ability to observed and murder from a distance away. I can’t tell you her method, but she has it. It is one of her weapons, maybe she used the structure of the rooms to set some kind of trap. We don’t know how it works, or what the technique is, I’ll just call it ‘superpowers’.”

“To observe the target from afar… is it clairvoyance?”

“Clair…what is that?”

Ouji-senpai tilted her head in confusion. Even though she mentioned superpowers, it seems that she doesn't have any knowledge about it. So, Fujino Asagami's skill was considered to be a non-superpower kind of power or something.

"Asagami-san is able to use long distances to be able to kill someone. Is that what you are trying to say, Ouji-senpai?"

"T-that's right. Your comprehensive skill is quite remarkable Shizune-san. Even though I cannot explain in detail, she must have used some sort of small scale wireless electronics… *cough*, huh?"

Misaya Ouji immediately used her hand to cover her mouth.

However, it is already too late. The poison was already in her system.

"Agh…. Guh, ah…!"

She fell onto the carpet while dragging the contents on the table with her.

Misaya Ouji's body twitches as she stared up at Shizune Seo who was peacefully sipping her tea.

"W..why? The killer was Asagami… Fujino…?"

"I don't believe that, but I do believe in superpowers, Ouji-senpai. There are methods to murder from long distance, otherwise there will be 2 cases that will be unexplainable."

The first is the death of Risu Miyazuki, which should be done by Asagami-san. We… Shizune Seo, Shiki Ryougi and Misaya Ouji were chatting at the lounge, Fujino Asagami left her seat. She should have done something at that time.

While the suspect that murdered Fujino Asagami was reduced till 3 people. Shizune Seo and Shiki Ryougi as well as Misaya Ouji. Among them, Shizune Seo and Shiki Ryougi were not the killer.

"The one that killed Asagami-san was you, senpai."

"…Ugh…"

Senpai didn't deny it. It must be because she was dying, this person will not deny her own lies. She was good in that way.

"Shiki-chan said that 'I am not interested in the murder cases'. At the same

time she didn't have any suspicious actions. So the one that was left is you, Ouji-senpai."

"….because of…these reasons….you…poisoned me…? You really are daring, Shizune-san…you didn't find any solid evidence, any method of killing…?"

"Even though I can see the future, I don't know the methods. I am not God. This is just a simple question of probability."

"Probability…? Are you saying…that I…was suspicious…?"

"Miyazuki-san and Asagami-san's deaths were too weird and were not logical. However, there is another thing that bothers me about you, senpai."

"What was it…?"

"Because you know how to pick locks."

"Because of that!?"

cough Misaya Ouji violently coughed and fell to the floor.

/ 10

I gave a sigh and leaned onto the sofa due to the guilt from killing Misaya Ouji.

If I don't deal with the killer, the dawn will not arrive. No matter how many people that love and respect senpai, to avoid that future, I can only do this----that's what I kept telling myself.

….What's the use of that?

Even though the future was postponed, we didn't have a future anymore.

There were too many people that had died.

We had blood on our hands.

Even though life goes on, if the truth is revealed, Shizune Seo's life will be over.

Ahh---it's this kind of ending again.

Why is the ending so really sad?

"…however, I will have a future now. I will see the dawn, and I'll give myself up---ah?"

I lifted up my head.

How could that be? I closed my eyes to observe the future.

"…It can't be. Nothing changed…. Was I wrong? Ouji-senpai was not the killer?"

No way. Misaya Ouji was the one that killed Fujino Asagami. Misaya Ouji did not deny the proof before she died.

So, I must have misunderstood a premise.

Such as, the killer could be me.

Such as, there could be one more person that did not turn up yet.

Such as----the killer could not be only one person.

I analyze the 1st to the 3rd murders.

The first victim was this Ishizue that was killed by Fumio Konno.

That was because she was the daughter of the owner of this hotel, so she should recognize this Shizune person.

The 2nd victim, Fumio Konno was killed by Azaka Kokutō staying next door.

That was because she could just easily rush into room 2 and commit the murder.

The 3rd victim, Azaka Kokutō was murdered by Risu Miyazuki.

She used the same method as how Azaka Kokutō murdered Fumio Konno.

"….So, this is…"

There would be a killer that accompanies the victim. There will not be a

common reason (motive) among all of the murders. It was as if everyone gathered here at the hotel to be murdered.

---Bu dump.

Konno-san was here to treat (murder) Ishizue-san.

The reason was not clear, but Asagami-san killed Miyazuki-san.

Ouji-senpai that saw through Asagami-san killed her.

---Bu dump.

“So----what about me?”

Shizune Seo’s reason for staying at the hotel.

I reached into my pocket, there was the hotel invitation that she gave me.

---Bu dump.

“That’s great. There’s no one here left that will get in my way, Shizune-san.”

----*sound of foot step*

Shizune Seo didn’t even have the time to turn her head towards the murmuring she heard behind her.

Blood splattered across the lounge.

The brain that was chopped off saw the future that it has left the body.

…This kind of ending again.

I closed my eyes silently

ハデス
第三回_【17：00～20：30】

/ Chapter 3
17:00～20:30

23rd of September 2009 , somewhere in Mifune City (観布子市).

The time is midnight, the sound *kari kari* and *kata kata* came from the traditional style wooden apartment that was built 30 years ago.

“It’s this kind of plot again?” My consciousness was still a little blurry, but I was already disappointed.

I never learned, lost my way yet again, and drifted along with the current.

“Ah----No way! That’s impossible! It can’t be changed anymore, the page numbers are all wrong! I’m going to be eliminated, this time I won’t be chosen!”

“Please be calm, Ouji-senpai. There’s still 6 hours till dawn. Last time we used 3 hours to produce a book, it would not be too hard to do it again.”

“You know there’s a difference between the photocopier printing (コピー誌) and offset printing (オフセット誌) right? This is the 5th anniversary memorial book for the popularity club*! If it wasn’t made properly that would be a disaster!”

(TL note: “popularity club” is subject to change)

“Excuse me----oh, everyone’s busy. Can you please pass Fujino-san this gift? It’s actually pickled seaweed. Can I sit here? Where should I begin helping out?”

“I will pass you the background of the centerspread. Because this is the most important shot of the protagonist’s first time flying up in the sky, the

details of the buildings have to be outlined. Oh, you can use the night view of this apartment as a reference."

"Ahaha, that's ridiculous. I just came back from work to my friend's house and I was given a question from the entrance exam of an art university. This organization is even more ruthless than my company. Best of all it is hand-painted. Ouji-sensei, since you have earned so much money, would you consider buying an art-tablet?"

"Income and operation procedures are two totally different things altogether, Kokuto-san. Electronics seem to contradict my aesthetics. Copy and paste is not my thing. Real art should be imitated (copy), that is how the soul of the artist continues to flow, this is to allow the continuation of the artistic epidemic (meme). Degradation, or rather precise mimicry is due to evolution. But electronics! If the data is exactly the same with the original, there will be no improvement; there won't even be a soul! That is not art, it is just ordinary groceries!"

"So manga is considered to be the borderline. Well, I really like this part of Ouji-senpai. Your partner is still asleep? The draft of the novel has been handed in already?"

"……She slept when I wasn't looking. You can just wake her up without any mercy, Kokuto-san."

"Ok. Hey---, it's already night time, teacher, please get up----"

"Ha----?"

Bam, my head was hit with something and I woke up. I straightened my body and looked around the room.

"Huh, I fell asleep?! I actually slept?!"

I looked at the clock and the time was a bit after 12am.

This is the hellish draft rush that requires the completed draft to be sent to the printing factory by 6am to be printed and finished in 3 hours or there won't be enough time.

Even though I don't want to say this, if the draft isn't finished in 6 hours, the story with me as the main character will come to an end (BAD END).

"You can still doze off in this kind of situation. Let me see the progress of the draft…What's this? There's not much left. You just need to write the postscript then you are already done."

“….you can say that… but I suddenly couldn’t remember what I wanted to write. Ah, Misaya-chan, how about your part?”

“Gone. Help. It will be a goner. It would be worse if I wasn’t elected. I’ll just die when it happens. As a lady gazing at the last leaf of a tree. It will be selling our soul to our desire (devil) when the result from this job that barely makes ends meet is that the election failed, that won’t be pretty at all!”

Misaya-chan’s hands did not even slow down as she complained.

Misaya-chan did not give up in her work even though she was mentally vulnerable and had hiccups in her plans. This was the famous student council president that was perfect since school days.

“I was hoping you would become a member of the society that could hand in their work in time. Fujino, should I enlarge this part? Would the characters look livelier if they were drawn with a fisheye view?”

“Oh please. If you increase the difficulty on your own accord, Kokutō-san will not be able to say anything, Misaya-san.”

“A leopard cannot change its spots. Sigh, why did we walk down this path anyway? If we were not found out by the ex-student council president when we were hiding at the student council office, our life would be different at this moment.”

Kokutō-san was completing Misaya-chan’s sketches while complaining. She was now an outstanding career woman serving in a first-class enterprise.

“I had already washed my hands from participating in this kind of work, no one can stop me now”, although she said that when she left the club, she would come to our rescue no matter what during difficulties. It seemed that her work was even more outstanding than Misaya-chan, rumor had it that her stepfather was a famous artist.

After Fujino-san graduated from university, she became the secretary for this “Reiroukan (玲瓏館)”. It was heard that her reason for coming here was that Misaya-chan complained ``instead of focusing on bridal training, why don’t you come here and help me out”.

I on the other hand was forced to write novels, while working together with Misaya-chan whose hobby was publishing magazines.

This was a scene on a summer day in 2009. It was 10 years after we graduated from Reien Girls Academy that we are still happily together.

“I say, what is the novelette this time? Is it another mystery? My ears are starving to listen to something when I am drawing, so just tell me the summary.”

Kokutō-san was a person that liked to multitask; her hearing and touch could be used separately. Although it was bad to discuss the novelette that was not done yet, the story plot was completed. So I began to explain the novelette’s summary.

“It is a story about a series of murders with Reien Girls Academy’s lobby as the setting…?”

“The cast is us during our schooling era…?”

“It was originally a mystery, but there were zombies outside the hotel…?”

The expression of the other 3 became pale and stark.

The background of the novel that used Reien Girls Academy 10 years ago. It was as if it was taboo to be reminded of the past among ourselves.

“Well, it’s alright. So, what was the murder case like? Was the first victim Ouji-senpai?”

“The first victim was not real. The later ones are whom everyone recognizes.”

I started to describe the plot of the novel.

There were 8 girls at the hotel. Girl A was killed by Girl B, Girl B was killed by Girl C, Girl C was killed by Girl D….. As if it was like a cycle of ‘continuous’ ‘independent’ murder cases.

“…Can I interject? So you are saying that before Girl B had a chance to proclaim her plans to kill Girl A, Girl B was killed by Girl C…. So that means that Girl C was killed by Girl D and so on. I feel that there is some problem with that.”

“There is no problem with that. Instead of saying that the process is like a cycle, it could be said that the uncovering of the truth was passed on to the next murderer. Just like the process of passing the bucket.”

“Not bad there Misaya-chan, the short story will be known as ‘Pass the bucket murder case’!”

“H….Hold on…That is unexpected…Your sarcasm is too much…”

“….there is no point in criticizing the writing style; the title is the one which proved to be fatal.”

“That’s not right; it’s the Ayaushi Lion Mask!” (Please refer to Doraemon for further information)

Kōkuto, who already proclaimed to have her hands clean, suddenly interjected. Her scent towards the original story was so sharp that it was scary.

“I like it…. However, according to the author herself, how would the story end? Were you killed? Were you still alive?”

“The fact is that you should read the original story. I am not that charitable to just spoil the ending for you.”

I stood up from the office table, opened the door and stepped out onto the balcony. It was because this cheap apartment was built on a high platform, you could view the entire city from here.

It was close to midnight, there were a few lights that could be seen from the residential areas.

The only lights remaining were coming from the subway and street lights. The population of the city was becoming lesser and lesser. There were close to twenty thousand people living here a few years ago, which was cut down to approximately 10 % of the original amount. It was as if the empty residential houses were graves, weathered down by rain and snow.

There were mysterious disappearances across the whole world over the past 10 years.

Neighbors disappeared as if they did not exist in the first place.

People randomly disappeared without a trace mysteriously, up until now.

Humans were really hardy, even though there was uproar during the first year it started happening, 3 years later it had become daily occurrences.

If you think about it, for those that could not predict the future, ‘tomorrow’ is already something that has nothing to be happy about. Towards the point where you disappear, you would think that ‘ah, it is my turn now?’ and leisurely accept it.

We would want to live each day without any regret, at the same time to be

able to think about it positively. We currently live in this life that slowly crawled by, surviving each and every tomorrow.

One day, we will disappear.

That was the crisis that we were facing in 6 hours.

The ending is not the sad part.

I felt that closing my eyes during these peaceful days was a little sad.

The tension that existed before melted when I returned to the room, it looked like a peaceful scenery. It seemed that the most difficult part was over.

There were only 4 pages left that needed work. It could be finished within the deadline.

“Phew---- This looks better. It is time to pull out the trump cards!”

“Just leave it be, Ouji-senpai.”

“Misaya, please allow me to brew another pot of tea. I will use the Marie Antoinette you brought back from Paris.”

“I really have trump cards. Really.”

Misaya-chan really wanted to reveal her trump cards.

Kōkuto carelessly dealt with her while the draft continued.

The rest of us chatted aimlessly while dealing with the work in front of us.

About work, about family. About item price, about hobbies. About tomorrow, about the past. About love.

This was a golden opportunity to voice out whatever it was in our minds as we chased different things. If I could I would like to stay in this sleep as if being submerged in quicksand. In the end, I cannot.

“Oh right, I had a dream before this.”

I just said something that I should not have touched.

“What’s wrong, bucket-passing-sensei?”

“At least just call me bucket-sensei…. It felt that when I woke up from the

dream, we will notice that the world will have 90 minutes before it ends, and there was an uproar or something."

"—"

"—"

"—"

The sound from the scratching of pens stopped. Everyone was staring at each other solemnly without saying anything.

"What's wrong?"

"…Nothing, continue on whatever you are working on. What about that dream?"

"Oh. It was my mystic eye of future sight… that could predict the future. It will always allow me to see the end where we all die. Even though we would do our best to avoid it, it will always fail in the end. No matter how many opportunities there are, no matter which path we choose it will still end up as failure. It could be because we lack the ability to do anything. Although I could predict the future, I could not make use of it at all, something like that."

I mentioned a topic that we rarely touched on before.

In other words, this kind of topic will definitely be laughed upon.

However, my dear friend --- Azaka Kokutō said, accepted it without any hesitation:

"No matter what option we choose, it's still impossible? Could the problem be due to the situation itself?"

I was immediately seen just like that.

"….the situation itself…was the problem…?"

"Right. It was because we were already on the wrong path since the beginning of the 90 minutes, it will not matter what we choose to help the situation. If we were to change the future, we should have realized it before we started counting down… well, ignoring each of our fates, I guess that the fate of the world that was seen through the future sight is not

changeable.”

“I see. I don’t really understand, but Kokutō’s explanation was really convincing. This is the person who became successful in the country’s largest cosmetic company and decided not to tell us.”

“Isn’t Shiseido (死生堂 direct pronunciation) the company that requires you to master some occult techniques before you can climb the corporate ladder?”

“Please don’t interrupt this. Fellow elegant authors. I am serious. Senpai and Fujino are serious. Did whatever I had said ring any bells for you?”

After Kokutō pointed it out, the 2 of them nodded their heads solemnly.

“Right, what you have said is true. The topic about the dream, I have some impression of it…. No, it should be that I had a dream as well. We were running away from zombie waves, killing each other; another one was that we were trying to become idols but failed miserably with no other way out, so we had to pull out favors and organized a farewell concert, which ended up with no one attending, I looked up at the spotlight while muttering ‘this was another end of the world…’ those kinds of dreams.”

“Me too. But the content was not like the idol one. For example, it was one of those summers, I was walking down the streets, muttering ‘Ah, it feels like the end of the world’ or something when everyone suddenly disappeared, it gave me a fright.”

“Other than that I had a nightmare where my brother was killed by the Killer Rabbit.”

“Ahahahaha!”

“In conclusion, everyone had similar dreams… No, rather everyone experienced firsthand the same kind of feeling. I hate this, I tried not to think about it, and now we cannot just foolishly deal with this anymore. Let me say this. Are we continuously doing the same exact thing, over and over again?”

“…Are you pointing out that we are continuously living in a parallel universe?”

“Ah, that is not what I meant. We, how do I say this…”

“It was as if we were beings that were created. We were acting out our roles, living on a stage, right? It was as if someone was dreaming, at the same time pulling other people into that dream.”

“That’s right, just like that! Ouji-senpai, your intuition is really spot on!”

“How rude. I am a woman that only speaks the truth…. Well, I only thought about that just now… Because, I feel that the life right now has a lack of reality, just like a dream. I am worried that you are all sucked into my dream.”

“Senpai…?”

“….Wasn’t it obvious? This sort of life, it shouldn’t be real no matter what. I, who had committed sins in Reien, how would I have obtained this kind of future…. That is why I had already noticed earlier, that all of this could be fake.”

It was as if she was mocking herself, she gave a little smile and set down the pen that she had used for 10 years back onto the table.

“…But, this should not be senpai’s dream right? No, it sounds like----“

Since when and how did we find ourselves in this paradox?

The situation about being in a dream and not in reality or not could be disregarded. In fact, we could tell that this place is fake.

“Everyone had the same dream for no apparent reason, even dreaming about it more than once is not possible. There should be some kind of reason. Somehow we had forgotten… So, in other words…”

If we could remember that reason, would we be able to end this paradox?

However, what should we do?

“We should just focus on finding real objects. Which of it is real, which of it is fake. If we could differentiate between them, expose their real body, this dream will collapse. But, if this situation did not happen, that means we would have lost to this paradox countlessly.”

Just as what Kokutō had said.

There should be a motive for us to face this sort of situation. Which led to Shizune Seo continuously experiencing these fake stories. Continuously forced to see the future where the world ended.

We tried our best to avoid that ending countless times, but in the end we would fail regardless.

So was this time. We will perish together at dawn.

Azaka Kokutō pointed out, there could be some things that were fake.

We were the fake ones.

Our relationship was not like this before, we were not able to laugh together this way. Misaya Ouji and Fujino Asagami were quiet because they understood this point.

Whose dream this was or how it existed in the first place were not important.

However, everyone had already begun to notice the beginning of everything.

No matter this time, the last time, the time before the last, as well as the doomsday that we always forget.

The culprit was that academy. If that day 10 years ago, that night, in the room at Reien Girl Academy, if that thing did not happen, we would not be this way now.

….And then,

Suddenly, someone's phone started ringing.

"Here is the latest news. Due to the aging of the 3rd phase of the reproduction simulation on Earth, disposal was decided upon those areas and the operation will begin at 0000 hour today. We will terminate the virtual lives in these residential reproduction simulations. We will not be able to have the capacity to accommodate everyone as the estimation for the 4th phase was inadequate. Everyone will be destroyed in their own simulation after 5 hours. Please look forward to your arrival within the time left."

The sound 'cha cha cha' appeared following the end of the announcement.

I ran up to the balcony and had a look, the corner of the Mifune City that was now void of any light, it was as if an eraser had run through, that corner became entirely white.

"Oh, so this time it's actually science fiction. We are actually living in virtual reality online.

“Ah, this kind of setting is not that bad.”

“Hm, isn’t it too sudden? Where was the foreshadowing!?”

Even though Misaya-chan protested against the sudden end, it was already fated to be.

The world was actually operating upon computer simulated programs, the announcement ‘your world is outdated thus I will unplug it’ and being struck by a meteor suddenly did not have any differences at all.

Because the end of the world and humans did not have any relationship at all.

No matter how peaceful it was inside, no matter how much of a courteous life you lived in, everything will have a cruel end due to the outside. That was a discontinuation, it was as if a halt in production, as if a recall from sale.

“……..”

Please don’t worry. Even though it ended here, the story will still continue on.

Even though people will die, the world will not come to an end.

Even though you were to die the world will not halt in its pace.

This is the reality of reincarnation. The end cannot be prevented. After we perish, we will not depart towards the afterlife, instead to a world with different settings and continue to avoid the end. There was no need to prove that the afterlife existed or not.

Compared to leaving for a world that we do not know whether it existed or not, it would be better to re-experience the same world again.

“….true, if it could continue to exist, so….”

Enough, I thought.

However,

“Is that possible? Is the end going to repeat itself?”

Sure enough, my friends gave me a little push when I was stuck in confusion.

“It won’t do. Even though I don’t know why it won’t do, it won't.”

“Hm, that was how I felt too. Even though it doesn’t matter, I am not satisfied.”

“Not satisfied? What is it that you are referring to, Kokutō?”

I asked uncertainty.

She looked reluctant and was a little embarrassed,

“Even though there were the same kind of circumstances, there were a lot of things that weren’t so bad, with the endings that were always sad, didn’t it somehow make you feel that there was something you could do?”

She gave us a look, and brought us out of the apartment together.

◆

After the announcement by the management (world) was broadcasted, the city looked like a parade. There was fire everywhere. Angry shouts. Cheers. Horrible shrieks. Wails. There were all sorts of sounds that humans could make, all of those that we could think of. Since the capacity of the world had been used up, it was best to reduce the amount of things that could move. There were even religions that had these kinds of non-sensible ideas appearing, so the whole world already had half of its population destroyed before dawn arrived.

We got into Kokutōs’ car, left the area of the city that had already become a state of pandemonium, and headed towards the mountains that had little to no people.

The trip only took more than 30 minutes, usually it would take up to an hour or more to reach there because I could only catch the bus. We felt that we had already grown up only at that place.

“….here we are, let’s walk, everyone.”

The gates that were rusty. The brick roads were taken over by wild grass.

…This was a great skeleton that no one would come back to anymore.

Reien Girl’s Academy had already turned into a great big rubble. I could not remember when she turned into this. I pushed the overgrown weeds

aside, pushed open the gate that was barely holding on, I tried recalling the building for the students.

The weird thing was, the lights in the academy were still lit up.

We passed through the green paved roads under the blue light emitted from the lamp outside.

Not long later, we reached our goal.

"--- Ah, I remembered now, that's right, it was here---"

10 years ago, someone moved 'that thing'.

Azaka Kokutōs' personal item. The person that was called Azaka Kokutōs' sensei's remnants.

We were playful, so that thing, we placed it in a box that looked traditional, at the same time modern.

The door into the lobby was open. We passed through halls to reach the 2nd floor. The corridor and stairs were filled with dust, and we reached the atrium.

The hotels' projection room.

10 years ago, and now they were at the same place where the unfortunate thing happened before.

The 5th friend that was not here. We abandoned that person, and she won't be able to witness this end.

"….Are you ready? I will open the door now. No matter what happens, please don't panic."

The door opened.

Kada Kada Kada Kada (Sound of door opening) We heard the sound of something solid that was moving. Blue light enveloped the whole room. The room still had the sofa that could accommodate 6 people and a projector with a tape that was projecting.

"-----I say, could it be"

I reached out my hand and touched the young lady's shoulder.

The young lady that was wearing the Reien Girl's Academy uniform fell with a thud.

She was already dead.

She died a long time ago.

This was the body she left behind 10 years ago.

I felt a sudden dizziness, as if I could faint immediately.

I mustered up my courage and pulled out the student's identity card that was in the pocket of the body.

"----W-Why?"

Shizune Seo.

10 years ago, that was the name of the young lady that was abandoned.

◆

"-----"

I felt so dizzy that I could hardly stand up.

Before the dawn could arrive, my world had already turned dark.

This was also a kind of World End.

I quietly closed my----

"Before that, let us make sure of it. If everything is fake, in the end, what is the real thing?"

I heard a voice from somewhere, it was what made me halt.

That's right. I still wanted to avoid failure. It would be no different as compared to the times before if I were to continue to drift along.

I closed my eyes, because I found the answer that belonged only to me.

I thought back on the things that had happened when my consciousness faded away.

Which one was the actual main topic? There was no doubt about it. This was a story to find the real killer. Or rather it was a journey to differentiate between the real and the fake.

What is fake? Of course it is referring to this unfortunate situation that could not have naturally occurred.

We were ordinary students. It was impossible for us to reach a zombie apocalypse, or to be dragged into a murder case, or something of a virtual reality.

Among them should be a stage.

Subjective (first person point of view) and objective (stage). Which side of it was real for humans?

After understanding this, please read the story again, you will find the answers.

I feel that,

1. Subjective – The relationship was either real or fake (1st chapter)

2. Objective – The settings of the stage was either real or fake (2nd chapter)

3. Philosophically – Which point of view was either real or fake (3rd chapter)

Which is it that I should head towards?

◆

“Like hell it would be. I will not follow that kind of rule.”

The corpse moved. The body of the young lady that was wearing the uniform stood up from the floor while she said those lines.

“Seo!? You were still alive!?”

Kokutō-san, Asagami-san, and Ouji-san ran towards Shizune Seo.

I coldly stare at the scene before me.

“It was because I could foresee those futures that I should not see, I was led blindly by you. What Azaka-chan said was true, everything had already ended since the beginning. It was a trap to continue predicting the future. So ----- I have been dead since the beginning to be able to trick you.”

I did not see it as a trap.

Since the beginning, I did not know that she had other methods.

Because she… Shizune Seo had the ability to foresee a future that was rare among humans.

I, on the other hand, only had the knowledge of the stage settings for this story’s ending.

“I remembered. This was not the academy 10 years later, or the zombie world, or the hotel world. This was just the academy’s projection room. It was during the incident when Azaka-chan, Fujino-san and I, as well as Misaya-senpai , an alumnus that became a director, were together, when someone touched the projector that Azaka-chan brought. This is the world after that incident.”

The projection room collapsed.

It turned into an empty world after it was found to be fake, unconvincing, when the tape was at its end.

“We were able to act out the story for 90 minutes only. Since you were the camera, your lens was always on us.”

“----that’s right. However, why did you recognize that it was me?”

“Obviously. This is Reien Girl’s Academy, where girls without boyfriends

congregate! You are commuting to a co-ed school, moreover you, who already have Mikaya-san, will not be here, Shiki Ryougi-san!”

“-----“

What’s going on? This was definitely interesting. I smiled without knowing the reason for it.

This could be a smile that was supercilious.

Because this is too interesting; I pulled out my katana to make the scene a little more epic.

“!? What is she trying to do, her murderous intent is strong!? Seo, is that really Shiki!?”

“You two, get down…!”

To protect the other two people that were being suppressed by my aura, Asagami-san stepped forward.

“Please bend…!”

The merciless Mystic Eyes of Distortion (歪曲の魔眼). The attack that was invisible to the naked eye. I effortlessly cut through the red and green helixes caused by the distortion, and aimed to sever the neck of Asagami-san that was rushing forward.

“Please fall back, you will be cut…!”

She had only a step more to let me serve her brains off. It seems that Asagami-san’s body was covered by some invisible item. This allowed her to escape my Maai: my range of attack (間合い, TL note: it’s a kendo term). How unfortunate.

….Sure enough, I should have started with Ouji-senpai. This person’s fairies were unable to one-hit-KO, but if they were used to support the vanguard, that would be the best formation if she was devoted to that role. She herself, however, did not notice this. How unfortunate.

“….Much thanks senpai. But we are sure about this now. No matter if Ryougi-san is real or not, it doesn’t matter now.”

“Yes. That is the source of all evil. However Asagami-san, it was not obvious that your personality was that dangerous.”

“Fujino was determined to be only hasty…. So, why does that thing look like Shiki? Truth to be told, this is really hard to deal with, I am really irritated now!”

“That you should ask yourself, Azaka-san. I am the end. My role is to end the story. That is why my role is to be ‘the enemy that you could not defeat’ that was decided by you.”

“Oh….True, true, we will never win against Ryougi-san…”

“….Yeah. That sort of fear that we experienced once won’t be that easy….”

“I can win. I can win anytime!”

“Sigh. That person, how strong is she? Please explain in one sentence.”

“It’s the same level with a director unexpectedly giving a hard demand during the planning of an animation.”

“That’s really undefiable isn’t it!?”

Ah, they are a bunch of debut actors that are hard to find these days.

That was why I couldn’t be patient any longer.

I still would want to see every one of you some more, I also feel a bit of remorse for making fun of you till now.

But I had no choice. My design principles were as such.

I was only a machine that could project the end.

I always made the world exist in a paradox, and the price was that I was a projector that could only project tragedies.

Even with intelligence, I could not obtain their dazzling humanity.

Because objects do not need human emotions.

Objects only needed values as an object.

If an object is thought more as a human, it will be damaged more easily.

That was why---that person who had made me, the depths of their hearts should be entirely non-human.

“However, I understand something. If she is not broken, we would not be

able to wake up.”

After listening to Shizune Seo’s words, the other three looked up.

They saw the undefeatable Ryougi Shiki (me), revealing a smile that was pessimistic.

“Ok, I understand. So, let’s go…!”

“I agree. If we were to constantly lose, it would not be healthy for our spirit.”

“All 4 of us will deal with her together, is that the objective?”

“That’s right! Don’t show mercy!”

They teamed up together and confronted me.

Since the beginning there was never this kind of plot development.

In other words, if they are not able to kill me now, they will spend the rest of their lives inside of me continuously acting out an unlimited cycle of endings (conclusions). Whereas the real body may already die and rot away.

“----That’s right. The sky will become bright soon. Are you able to defeat the main character (me), Shizune-san?”

I smiled. I gave them a slight smile. They built a common front that will never exist in reality, together they try to defeat the undefeatable enemy.

Ahhhhh, this is such a wonderful World End.

This time, I can finally close my eyes quietly----

/Final Record

◆

“Hey, what time did you plan to sleep? Wake up, you four idiots.”

A sudden sharp pain came to my forehead.

It felt like some kind of leather whip kind of thing hit my brain, I--- Shizune Seo, finally woke up.

“Ugh!? I finished writing it… the manuscript is already done!”

This is bad, was it Tamaki-chan (環) from the art department that came for the manuscript? I hurriedly climbed up, but to see that I was basked in a blue glow in a dark room.

“….eh…?”

The room was dark and bright at the same time.

The old projector was running with some sounds, its glow was projected onto the wall.

There were a few chairs in the room, Azaka-chan and the others were lying on the floor, standing next to the projector was a young lady dressed in a kimono with a face of unpleasantness, Ryougi Shiki-san.

“Ryougi-san…? Why are you here…?”

“You were the ones that called me to the cultural festival. I purposely came here but could not find any one of you. Are you trying to get killed? I used up a whole day just to search for you.”

That kind of rude tone can only be from Ryougi-san.

Last year’s summer we met due to fate, after that Azaka-chan introduced me to the young lady in a kimono.

“Well… I say, where is this place…? I feel that… I had struck Shiki’s body, and suddenly it seemed that I was spinning round and round in the air…”

“….It was Kukinage（空気投), its Kukinage from Aikido… Kokutō-san’s body was like a blade when it rushed towards us… I got hold of her…. Ah, I can’t really remember it well…”

“No, you mercilessly fended her off, Asagami-san. You didn’t even spare a look towards Kokutō-san that was plunged head first into the wall, instead using all of your powers, you caused the room that contains me in it….”

The other 3 people that were lying on the floor… Azaka-chan, Asagami-san, Ouji-senpai slowly woke up.

They narrowed their eyes when their view fell upon the projector, while observing their surroundings in a daze, finally they noticed Ryougi-san and I.

“Shiki!? Why are you here!?”

“….sigh. Go ahead and ask Seo. And Azaka. You brought this out?”

“This…. Right, that’s it!”

Azaka-chan, Asagami-san and Ouji-senpai looked at the projector simultaneously.

The projector was still running, but the most important film and film reel were taken down. Obviously, the film cartridge was being held in Ryougi-san’s hands.

“Were you the one who stopped it, Ryougi-san…?”

“I guess so. The film that was being projected was really shabby so I decided to turn it off, but there was no effect no matter how much I pushed the switch for the power supply. I became angry and took out the film, the movie stopped. Just like what Touko said, this is a terribly

defective item."

Taking out the film… true, that will stop the movie.

The projector worked by projecting the still images on a film, through the beam of light onto the screen by the machine. The film reel spun and the film that had already projected was fed into another reel.

Ryougi-san didn't care if the movie was still being played, she immediately cut off the film, then took down the rest of the film and reel.

"….so…. in other words… we escaped?"

"…looks like it. Even though the ending was hard to accept."

"….That. Please tell me what is going on?"

Azaka-chan, Asagami-san and I looked at each other, we didn't know where to start.

We understood roughly most of the situation.

Even though it was hard to believe, we were sucked into the projector. Of course, it was not our bodies but only our souls. After that we acted out the characters in the movies that were projected.

"…group hypnosis, brainwave tuning, soul-linking… Since it was left behind by Touko-sensei, if we could look at the information booklet there should be some kind of explanation…."

However we were not concerned about the 'how', we were concerned about the 'why'.

The projector had some sort of reason to do that sort of thing to us.

"Azaka, you didn't know anything about this?"

"This was a projector that could automatically produce a story. It could instantly project a movie even if there is no movie in the film, right?"

"Ouji-senpai?"

Without noticing, Ouji-senpai began to seriously observe the projector.

"…..Really. It seems that the films were empty. This sort of empty film will not have any movie. But there were still pictures being projected out, that

means that those stories were created by ourselves. Even though I don't know what the principle is, this projector was able to read the memories of the people here; isn't this an initial production machine which uses ideas from a derivative work? (TL: since I am not so sure of the meaning here, I will explain to you in my words [the machine uses memories and converts them to film, referring to the derivative work, and produces films or movies with it, thus it is an initial production machine])"

"….that should do, Ouji. How did your brain turn faster than Azaka?"

Mm, Azaka-chan unhappily frowned her brow.

"That was not coincidental. Because my weakness was that I was not great at dealing with mental stress. If it was just like this, I wouldn't lose to anyone when I have reliable people by my side."

"…."

Just like that, even though with excellent basic performances (specs), her mentality was weak, that was why Ouji-senpai was loved by everyone.

"With the memories of other people as material… that means, that world was the wish we wanted to come true….right?"

"….hard to say. Rather than wishes, it was closer to the fear or taboo in our subconscious. I could not accept zombies or that kind of stuff whole heartedly."

"Oh, I was the one that wanted zombies. 'Carrie' (TL: zombie movie that came out in 2013) or 'Demons' (TL: demons-possessing-human movie that came out in 1985) or something, the scenes splattered with blood are exciting right?"

"…. It should be my fault due to the presence of some elements of mystery, but Asagami, your taste should only suit mild stuff. Eh? If so, that place that looked like Tokiwa should be because of Seo… Ah no, its Ouji---"

"*Cough cough*. Anyway, the machine was the cause of everything right, Ryougi-san"

"Ah, according to the creator, it acted both like a projector and a director, it was the best machine to provide the ultimate entertainment, it was the next generation creators made to tailor fit the fast food era---I heard."

"You heard….? Because it was faulty? Because it uses the people around as materials, even if their bodies rot it will still continuously broadcast

films?”

“No, it won’t kill the materials right? Because this was a machine that was designed with the idea (heart) ‘if there is an audience, it will have to provide stories forever’. If you were to point out its flaws it should be about the consciousness (soul). The function was perfect, but it rejected itself.”

“….rejected, itself…?”

“Ahh, it was just a machine that produced stories, but it could not accept that it would only do just that. Even though it was given the wisdom ‘to produce films so that others could be happy’, that wisdom resulted in a conflict. ‘I want to capture a world that is happy. But the world will always end. No matter how happy the plot was, the world will end no matter what that kind of feeling.”

“….”

So at that stage, it was that happy, but it was just as sad at the same time.

The projector wanted to allow people to experience entertainment that resembled dreams.

However there will always be an end. No matter the process of obtaining happiness, if it was a movie, if it was a film, that world would end in just mere 90 minutes.

It was a machine with a sole purpose to project out paradise of realities; the more loyal it is to its duty, the more that wonderful paradise will be ruined.

Just like a human life, as if it was in a movie, there will be difficulties in accepting endings.

So the machine became faulty. It lost its way. Since endings were unavoidable, it projected the next story to hide the previous sad ending.

“…conflict between function and consciousness…. This projector only wanted to provide us with happiness since the beginning…. No, it was just following our orders to provide happiness.”

“Right. No matter how sad the story is. The machine could not accept that fact. It’s too romantic for it to be a dream maker.”

Ryougi-san produced a small knife out of its kimono, and aimed it towards the projector.

I recalled the endings of the previous few stories in a daze.

“…that”

That’s right, reality no matter what was always sorrowful.

We could not even come to terms with that fact.

I, who could foresee the future, understood that life will always be sad no matter what.

However, we continued to work on our life, we tried our best to change it into a comedy, we lied to ourselves that our lives were happy ones, this was the principle of a movie.

I saw the end of the world from a dark shore, and felt sadness. It was not me who had felt it, that ‘me’ with emotions and me were not related.

“That, can, can you let me have that projector!”

“Har?”

Ryougi-san turned around and revealed an unhappy face.

Azaka-chan and Asagami-san also looked at me disbelievingly.

“What do you or not, this is a piece of shit that the annoying bitch left behind. It doesn’t belong to anyone. This is a dangerous item that needs to be destroyed, can’t you understand this principle?”

“Then, then give it some sort of insurance. Like cutting off its power supply after 3 hours or something, that kind of small equipment!”

“I say. If it were that easy Touko will not ---“

“There won’t be a problem I think? This guy, it is just a projector. If it was just on battery it would power itself off after 6 hours.”

Hey, Azaka-chan unplugged the projector main power cable. Even though it was too obvious, the projector was always set up on the socket.

“….”

Cheh, Ryougi-san stuck out her tongue, and kept her small knife. It could be because she was unhappy that the prey ran away when it was so close, so she released her anger by pulling the plug out of the socket.

Click clack click clack, click, the projector finally slowly quit.

From the longest of times that the projector was running non-stop, it could finally rest.

The rumor about the ‘magical movie theater’ among the 7 most unexplainable myths in Reien, it was a thing in the past since then, a few months ago.

◆

“So, I am ok with it. Why did you run away when the cultural festival was really lively to watch a movie?”

“Ah. Right, why was it again, Azaka-chan?”

“The main reason was Ouji-senpai. Ouji-senpai had already graduated but she just wanted to search through our luggage, so she found Touko-sensei’s projector when she was searching through my stuff. Weren’t you the one who said ‘let’s play it and see’ and dragged us all the way to the hotel.”

“I-I just wanted to check if it was broken or not!”

“Ah… that’s right. Your university entered the Film Appreciation competition right? You said that even though you didn’t become a manga artist, at least it was like continuing the work of the artist that was left behind or something.”

“Senpai really made a scene. And she rubbed her cheek on the projector.”

“It is a really stiff reaction of yours when spreading your wings, your spirit valve (TL: or bulb , バルブ) was screwed on too tightly.” (TL: I don’t understand this sentence at all, not even the Chinese translated one, so I’ll put in the original sentence here so that you guys can help me out. 普段固い反動で羽の伸ばし方がおかしいのよ。精神のバルブひねりすぎ。)

“Screwed on too tightly! That was too mean, Kokutō-san! What ‘it was defective so it will be no problem’, ‘it’s just a prop’, ‘it won’t break any school rules’ that kind of thing, I shouldn’t have listened to it right!?”

“You are right Ouji-senpai. We didn’t look down on you, instead we really admired you.”

“Oh, that’s really good.”

“Right, that’s really really good.”

“I say, don’t you think this is like a Déjà vu!?”

Ouji-senpai’s face was red because she was ashamed… no, it was because she was angry.

For the sake of senpai’s name, let’s just leave things as it is.

“Are you done? Come with me for a moment Ouji. Someone’s waiting for me at the school’s gate.”

“Har? Why me?”

“Among all of us the only one that could allow outsiders to enter is you . Don’t sprout anymore nonsense , let’s go. Just treat it as repayment for saving you.”

“Hey….!”

Ryougi-san grabbed Ouji-senpai’s hand, dragged her away regardless of anything. I observed that view, foresaw the future within the next half an hour, I couldn’t help myself and smiled bitterly at that future that was as cruel as hell. The person that was waiting at the gates, you don’t really need any powers to be able to predict who it was.

“Speaking of which, that last battle between Ryougi-san and us….”

“It’s useless Seo-san. That remark was rather tasteless.”

Asagami-san smiled as if she was a little kid that did a prank.

“Let’s just keep it a secret. No matter the era, it would be best if the ending was not revealed.”

My dear friends gave me that déjà vu look.

Final Record/Finish

/ Epilogue

Autumn still arrived.

It caused people to want to return to their warm sleep.

It dyed all the leaves in the forest red.

Despite the idea of being a tearful child away from civilization, even a girl dormitory life would be enjoyable, we are Reien Girls Academy. It was also tailored fit for the cute young ladies (us) as the ‘Since you are here, you will only be a winner if you are a rare creature’, a place that was filled with excitement and romantic weather-independent motorized fortress. Even though there were countless cruelties that were described in this book, only 10% of what was written happened in reality, so to all of the juniors you have nothing to worry about.

Time flies and I will soon be participating in the 3rd cultural festival after entering high school.

This series was supposed to be published without following a schedule, instead it was published as a separate issue as part of a last gift. The magazine has always been arranging the works of the seven most unexpected stories collected from different classes and clubs, but this time it’s about the things the author myself had experienced, as well as my friends, that were mostly rendered, which are just fictional stories. How much was real or created, it is up to you who is going to spend your time at Reien to find out the answers. Beware, if you were to stay at Natsumi Hall, never stay with 8 people at the same time. If you were to obey this rule, I promise that all of you will experience an indescribable night.

So. The latter is some gossip.

The time in Reien that I thought since I first entered will last forever will come to an end.

It has been 6 years since the beginning. The sentimental teenage time, I had spent it all on this academy.

It was still alright even though there wasn't much freedom, no friends that I can only meet here, no nuns I admire, all these will become very distant to me. Even if we were together again, the times where everyone was happy in this isolated academy will never come back again.

The me right now felt really sad, and at the same time really proud.

I finally experienced the feeling that the previous senpais had experienced, the end of our youth.

This will not be recorded down anywhere, it was a part of me, the last pain.

This is also a kind of World End.

No matter if there were tears or happiness, the end will come.

In the end, the world will still move on, so I didn't have the time to close my eyes.

No matter how many things were to leave, we will still admonish ourselves to go with the flow, and to prepare for the next stage; in the future if you encounter another person, please tell him/her the end that you had experienced. Although there are most that will forget about it, there are some that will remember it in their hearts.

Many things, even in the past, if left alone will strongly hinder me in the next scene. If it is fortune that we met by chance, I wish to listen to your fun stories of the end that you saw at that moment. Anyhow, if you forget it immediately,even if I am alone, I might meet people who I can remember forever.

Finally, I would like to mention Chairperson of Literature Club Tamaki-san for given me this opportunity to write this book, roommate Miss A assisted me until the very last minute, friends willingly gave permission to use episodes, Miss F as proofreader, and I will not forget the winter during high school first year, I want to thank M-Senpai that gave me warm coffee when I was trembling while holding a pen in the female toilet.

This book is dedicated to me, those girls, and the girl that is still revolving till now.

◆

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